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THE JAZZ AND NEW MUSIC MAGAZINE

WIRE

anthony braxton

bill

frisell

bobby hackett

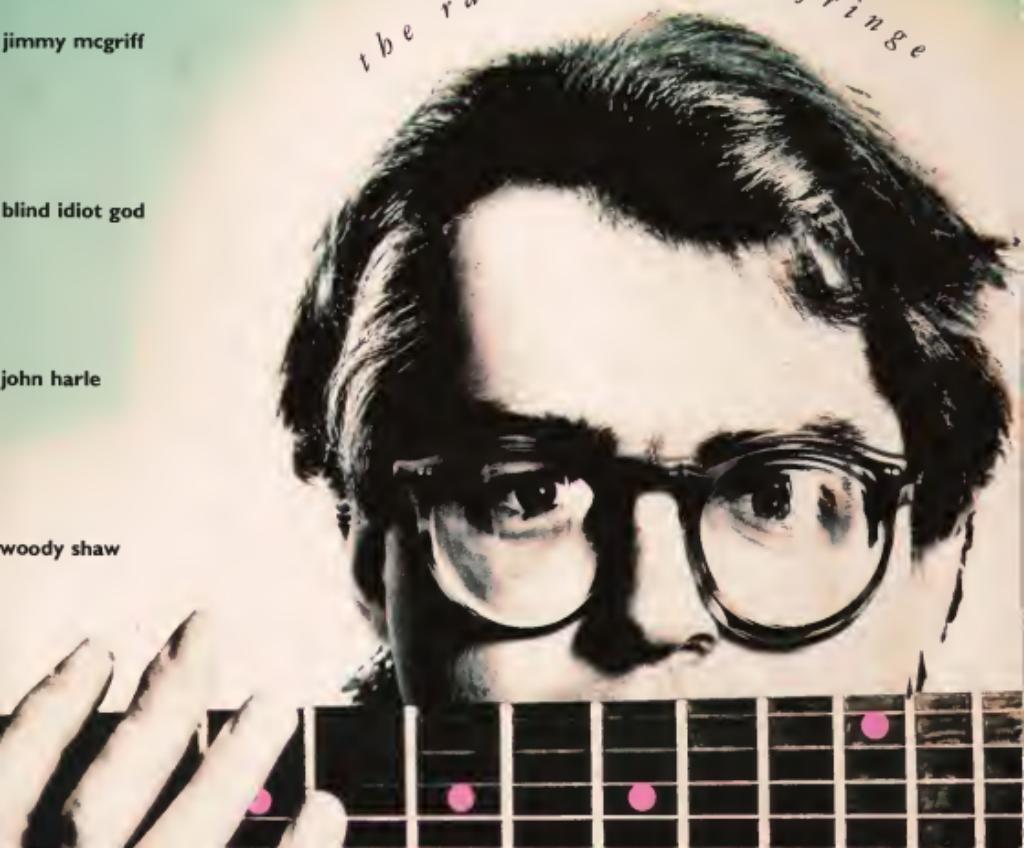
jimmy mcgriff

blind idiot god

john harle

woody shaw

the radical guitar fringe



WIRE MAGAZINE

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*"I can definitely say that music won't stop.
It will continue to go forward."*

CHARLIE PARKER 1953.

**COVER:**

Bill Frisell.

a lead of

her time.

Photo by

Mel Yain

WIRE

Issue 65

July 1989

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- 6 **Now's The Time** All new plus Michael Cuscuna on Woody Shaw
- 18 **John Harle** Andy Hamilton gets classical
- 22 **Livewire** The Greeks, The Ichibes and more
- 26 **Jimmy McGriff** Ben Watson gets keyed up
- 30 **Anthony Braxton** Oakland calling – Brian Morton answers
- 36 **Bill Frisell** The lone picker meets Jonathan Coe – exclusive!
- 41 **New York** Howard Mandel polishes the Apple
- 42 **Bobby Hackett** An appraisal by mild-mannered Martin Gayford
- 47 **Subscribe** An irresistible offer
- 48 **Blind Idiot God** Biba Kopf gets religion
- 50 **Competition** Another contest of wits
- 51 **Soundcheck** New records from McCoy Tyner, Chet Baker, many more
- 66 **The Write Place** Just the place for you

idea

INTERESTING TO see Terri Lyne Carrington profiled in a recent issue of *Billboard*. "Pigeonholes are for pigeons," she starts off by saying, as a way of deflecting possible criticism of her new solo set, *Real Life Story*. When further quizzed on why she mixes jazz and pop on the record, she says: "Not too many people criticise me to my face, but those types are closed-minded people. They're not people I'm really concerned with."

Sometimes it seems like there's nobody here but us pigeons. The clamp which artists like Ms Carrington seem to feel has spread like a virus through the contemporary jazz community. Don't label me. I'm not just a jazz artist (as if that were some kind of dishonour). I want to try many things. I don't want to be confined, restricted, held back.

Much of this sort of conversation is so much corporate garbage. When the vice-president of Polygram Jazz says that Carrington has "decided to pursue a more contemporary direction", it's awfully tempting to substitute the word "profitable" for "contemporary". An outstandingly gifted drummer, Carrington is no better or worse than hundreds of other performers when she opens her mouth to sing. I guess it's hard to get hits when all you do is drum, even if it hasn't bothered Art Blakey or Tony Williams too much.

The wish for eclecticism is covering a multitude of sins. Jazz has long been a fabulously rich and diverse music, even within the "restricting" parameters which so many musicians want to wriggle free of. Is singing pop music such a release into freedom? This isn't about getting out of pigeonholes. What's always bothered the music business is the difficulty of marketing jazz artists. If they turn to soul or dance music, to "adult contemporary", then it's much easier for the companies. They have those pigeonholes dusted out and ready.

Achieving excellence in several musical styles is one of the hardest things a performer can attempt. But it always seems like a soft option, because it lets you out of the intense practice and refinement of a particular genre. There's nothing intrinsically wrong with eclecticism – this magazine is every month more eclectic than any musician can be – but it's a bad excuse for an easy way out, too.

This month we bid farewell to our publisher, Chris Parker, who has left The Narmara Group. His tireless devotion to proofreading has pulled the magazine through from month to month; his presence on the masthead will be greatly missed, as will his belief in bowls of muesli and Ian Carr's Nucleus. Nevertheless, we will continue to welcome Chris to these pages as a regular contributor, and his admirers can follow his further adventures as the jazz diarist for *The Independent*. Later, bro'.

*

RICHARD COOK

WIRE MAGAZINE

Micheál Ó Súilleabhaín

Oileán / Island



Micheál Ó Súilleabhaín has been a key figure in the Irish music field over the last two decades.

As a lecturer in University College Cork, he has taught and encouraged both classical and traditional players, and now teaches classical music to traditional students and vice versa. His central idea – to provide a meeting place for music and musicians of different backgrounds – is realised with stunning results on his latest recording 'Oileán'. A series of new compositions, with Ó Súilleabhaín as pianist and conductor, and featuring The Irish Chamber Orchestra, flautist Matt Molloy of the Chieftains, Tony McMahan, Mel Mercier, and Calm Murphy demonstrates that it is possible to bring different forms of music together without compromising their individual identity or integrity.

Available Now On CD (CDVE40) LP(VE40) Cassette (TCVE40) From All Good Record Shops



ONLY 149 SHOPPING DAYS TO XMAS!

READERS should start saving now for two ambitious recording projects due to hit the streets, and your pockets, just in time for the Xmas market. London's Leo Records is planning to issue a boxed set of eight CDs called *New Music From Russia: The 80s*, comprising over nine hours of previously unreleased material from such artists as Arkhangelsk, Valentina Goncharova, Orkestrion, Tatevik Oganyan, Anatoly Vapnirov, Sergey Kuryokhin, Homo Liber, Valentina Ponomareva, Moscow Improvising Trio, Asphalt and members of The Ganelin Trio in solo and trio performances. Essays, photographs and illustrations are included in the set. Release date December, in a limited edition of 1000 copies; the cost to people who subscribe now will be £100. Enquiries to Leo Records, 35 Cascade Avenue, London N10 3PT.

Meanwhile FMP Records have announced details of a set of 11 CDs documenting Cecil Taylor's month-long stay in Berlin last summer. The set includes one Taylor solo CD, six duo CDs (Taylor with Gunter "Baby" Sommer; Paul Lovens; Louis Moholo; Han Bennink; Tony Oxley; Derek Bailey), one trio CD (Taylor, Tristan Honsinger, Evan Parker), a double-CD of the Cecil Taylor European Orchestra and one CD of the Cecil Taylor Workshop Ensemble. An accompanying booklet includes articles (in English and German), quotes from the musicians and photographs. The set will be released in November in a limited edition of 1000; price to those who subscribe before 31 July is DM205.20, later price will be DM350. The CDs will also be available separately, excepting the

Workshop Ensemble. Information from Free Music Production, Lübecker Strasse 19, D-1000 Berlin 21 (West).

HOW MANY OF YOU ARE THERE IN THE SEXTETT?

A A C M REEDSMAN Henry Threadgill brings his seven-piece "Sextett" (sic) to the UK for two July dates. The group (same line-up as on his recent *Reg. Bush And All* LP) will play Leeds, venue tba, on 17 July and London, Bloomsbury Theatre (18). Details on the Leeds gig from 0532 608301; London box office number is 01-387 9629.

ZEN BANGISM

VIOLINIST Billy Bang has strung together a short, four-date English tour this month. His quartet — Michele Rosewoman (piano), John Ore (bass), Zen Matsuura (drums) — visits Derby St James Restaurant (12 July); Manchester Band On The Wall (13); London Pizza Express (14); Birmingham Jazz Festival (15). Details from 01-439 7791.

IMPROV BREAKOUT!

THESPNM's day of improvised music, first mentioned in *WIRE* 64, has been dubbed "The Earls Court Breakout" and will take place at London's Donmar Warehouse, 41 Earls Court, on 30 July. A concert at 2.30 pm with Evan Parker solo, Russell/Durrant/Butcher and the Akema Kuhn Trio will be followed by a seminar discussion (4.30 pm) then by performances from musicians chosen by the SPNM Listening Panel (5.30 pm). The Breakout closes with a second concert at

7.30 with Derek Bailey/Steve Noble, the Chris Burns Ensemble and Veryan Weston/Phil Minton. Food, drink, records/cassettes/CDs will be on sale. Details from 01-491 8111.

Meanwhile, the London Musicians Collective are organising an "Improvisation For All" festival from 17-23 July. The festival will feature nightly performances at over 20 London venues and involve over 100 musicians, including Evan Parker, Barry Guy, Paul Rogers, Keith Tippett, Alan Tomlinson, John Butcher, Vanessa MacKinnon, Mark Sanders, Maggie Nicols, Phil Durant and more. Details from 01-487 5569.

QUAYS TO THE HIGHWAY

ROADSIDE PICNIC, Orphy Robinson, Loose Tubes and Tommy Cluse are among the artists playing Jazz At The Quays, two days of music at Surrey Quays site, Surrey Docks Road, Rotherhithe, London SE16 on 29 and 30 July. The event, part of the Surrey Quays Summer Festival, highlights more traditional jazz from the Jack Sharpe Big Band, Tommy Chase Qt, Harry Gold, Brian Priestley Septet and more on the 29, then unleashes the modern sounds of Loose Tubes, Human Chain, Roadsides Picnic, Orphy Robinson Qt and others on the 30. Admission on both days is FREE, and the music will run from noon to 10 pm. A *WIRE*-supported event!

FLOCKS BY NIGHT

SAXIST Andy Sheppard takes his six-piece flock to seven UK concerts this month. Catch them at Marlborough Festival (7 July); Bristol Theatre Royal (8); Nor-

wich St George's Festival (12); Wigan Jazz Festival (15); Cambridge Festival (23); London Town & Country Club — with John Scofield Trio and Orphy Robinson Quartet (24); Brighton Zap (26).

FREEBIE GB

JAZZ musicians are invited to apply for Arts Council bursaries as part of a scheme "intended to help with the preparation of specific projects or longer term development of ideas within the improvised music area". The scheme is not open to full-time students, nor is it intended for the purchase of instruments or equipment. Previous applicants may re-apply, excepting those who received bursaries in 1987 or 1988. Closing date for receipt of applications is 21 July. For details and application forms, send a SAE to John Muir, Music Officer, The Arts Council, 105 Piccadilly, London W1V 0AU.

BALD SOPRANO

SAХOPHONIST Lol Coxhill plays four nights at London's Vortex Jazz Bar this month, beginning a series of Vortex projects "devoted to the work of outstanding British jazz musicians". The Coxhill series includes a solo night (17 July); "Before My Time" — traditional musics played by Coxhill, Paul Rutherford, Roger Turner and Dave Green (18); "Standard Conversations" — popular songs played (and sung) by Coxhill, Veryan Weston and Stuart Hall (19); and a closing night of Lol's film and theatre music played by himself, Phil Minton, Stuart Hall and Bob Flug (20). Details from 01-254 6516.

And on 12 August Coxhill plays a solo gig at the Narrowboat,

Canal St, Nottingham to mark the launch of his biography, *The Bald Soprano* written by Jeff Nuttal and published by Tak Tak Tak at £6. Details from 0602 706983.

BLOWING FUSES

BLOW THE FUSE is the name of a new weekly jazz club at the Duke Of Wellington, 119 Balls Pond Road, London N1, which hopes to lay emphasis "on the growing number of women musicians involved in the modern jazz and world music scenes". The club is open Thursday nights, 8.30–midnight, and admission is £3 (£2 concessions). In July the regular house band of Deidre Cartwright (guitar), Alison Rayner (bass) and Cliff Venner (drums) will be joined by the Dill Katz Trio (6); Kathy Stobart and Joen Cunningham (20), and other artists the on 13 and 27 July. Details from 01-254 8937.

CHEERFUL EARFUL

RADIO THREE jazz in July includes a new four-part series on Fats Waller, titled *The Cheerful Little Earful*, to be presented by Alyn Shipton on Friday evenings at 5.45 pm, starting 14 July. And the new series of *Jazz Today* explodes over the airwaves with music from Iain Ballamy Q (8 July); Howard Riley (22) and the Eddie Prevost Quarter, with Evan Parker (29). Presenter is *Wise's* Chris Parker and retransmission time is 11.30 pm.

KEEP ON KNITTING!

THE KNITTING FACTORY, NYC's premier new music venue, stages its second annual festival from 18 June to 8 July. July highlights include the Mal-



Strike right! The GANELIN TRIO and other Russian avant-garde jazz players are ready for Xmas stockings in a special anti-NATO short-story CD benefit.
Photo by NICK WHITE.

Waldron/Ed Blackwell duo (1 July); Ceci Taylor (1); Don Pullen Trio (2, 3); Andrew Hill Group (4, 5); Lounge Lizards (6); Marilyn Crispell/Andrew Cyrille duo plus the Reggie Workman Ensemble (8). Details 0101 212 219 3006.

VIVA! CUBA! SALSA! ETCETERA!

RUBEN Blades, Celia Gonzalez and Orquesta Reve spearhead a South American invasion as London goes Latin in July. The South Bank's Gran Gran Fiesta is a red-day party in the Jubilee Gardens from 6–16 July, featuring the Mexican Los Camperos De Valles (10–13); Argentinian tango with Juan Jose Mosalini Y Su Trio (14); Cuba's Celia Gonzalez Y Grupo Campo Alegre (15); and Orquesta Reve, also from Cuba (16). Plus food, drink, acrobats, jugglers,

carnival floats and workshops. Details from 01-928 8800

And Latino Londres 89 is a one-day festival at the Bruden Academy on 17 July, with salsa star Ruben Blades and his Son De Solar Band, plus conga legend Ray Barretto. Details 01-326 1022.

AUGUST PRESENCES

LEGENDARY jazzmen Jimmy Giuffre and George Russell will be visiting the UK in August. Multi-reedsman Giuffre brings his quartet to the Beccom Festival on 19 August, with other dates likely to be added and a return visit promised for October. Composer-pianist George Russell takes a UK/USA orchestra that will include Andy Sheppard, Ian Carr, Chris Biscoe and Ashley Slater to concerts at Coventry Belgrave Theatre (10); Aldeburgh Festival (18); Bre-

con Festival (19); Edinburgh Festival (20); London Ronnie Scott's Club (28–31) – during which time a recording will be made.

Illustrous visitors due later in the year include Sun Ra, Keith Jarrett, the Bob Berg/Mike Stern Band and John McLaughlin. Watch the skies (or this page – Ed).

WIGAN'S BIG 'UNS

AKT BLAKEY. Andy Sheppard and Courtney Pine are among the artists playing this year's Wigan Jazz Festival, which runs from 15–22 July. The Andy Sheppard Sextet plus the Jim Mullen Qt open the festival on the 15, followed by the Courtney Pine group (19) and a closing concert from Art Blakey & The Jazz Messengers on 22

LONDON BLITZED!

JOHN SCOFIELD and Jimmy Smith make lightning visits to London this month. Jimmy Smith, original wild man of the Hammond organ, plays the Town & Country Club on 20 July, supported by the Tommy Chase Band; and guitarist Scofield's trio joins the Andy Sheppard Sextet and Orphy Robinson Quartet for a W're-sponsored triple header on 24 July. Scofield and Sheppard also play the Cambridge Festival on 23.

OBITUARIES

FOUR major jazz figures passed in May: drummer Steve McCall, pianist Phineas Newborn Jr, trumpeter Woody Shaw and Village Vanguard owner Max Gordon. Michael Cuscuna's obituary of Woody Shaw appears on page ten, while Howard Mandel's New York report on page 41 pays tribute to McCall, Newborn and Gordon.

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m o n t b

ALDERSHOT <i>West End</i> <i>Centre</i> (0252 330040)	THE DOG SLIM GAILLARD	1 STOCKTON <i>Dreamland Am</i> <i>Castro</i> (0642 611625)	LAIN BALLAMY QT MARTIN SPEAK QT	15 STANLEY JORDAN QT/ LARRY CARLTON
JOHN BURGESS TRIO 21	DUKE ELLINGTON	HORNWEB	20 PINSKI ZOO	16 DIRTY DOUEN BRASS
BIRMINGHAM <i>Festival</i> (021 454 7020)	ORCHESTRA	1 ULEY <i>Promo Art Centre</i> (0453 856703)	TREVOR WATTS MOOR MUSIC	21 BAND SARAH VAUGHAN
CAB CALLOWAY 9	NATIONAL DR JAZZ	NANQUIDNO	22 STEVE WILLIAMSON, GARY CROSBY, JOHN	13 THE SUN SW4 (01-622 4980)
MILES DAVIS 10	WITH TOMMY SMITH	2 WHITSTABLE <i>Formal</i> ORPHY ROBINSON QT	26 STEVENS	21 SHIKU YANO, CHEZUE MIZONO, MARCIO
BELES BROTHERS	FRITH/ZORN, FRITH/		LYRIC THEATRE	22 MATTOS
BAND 11	LUSIER	2 WINDSOR <i>Am Castro</i> (0753 859336)	BAR 96 (01-741 0824)	6 LOE COXHILL/ HASLAM,
TOMMY SMITH BAND/	ATLANTIC BRIDGE	JOHN BURGESS TRIO	22 SO IT GOES (lunchtime)	8 RUTHERFORD
TOMMY CHASE BAND/	LEEDS <i>Temple Club</i>		PEMBURY TAVERNS	13 DURANTE, TURNER/ RANGERCRIFT,
Jean TOUSSAINT	(0332 742066)		SO IT GOES	15 MATTOS
BAND 12	HORNWEB	14 London	PRINCE OF	20 DEPPA, BELLATELLA/ BAYLISS, MARKS
BUDDY GUY &	MANCHESTER <i>Bowl'On</i>		ORANGE 8E (01-2379181)	27 WATERMANS ART
JUNIOR WELLS/	<i>The Ball</i> (061 8326625)	BLOOMSBURY	SO IT GOES	CENTRE <i>Bowling</i> (01-847 5651)
CLARENCE	PINSKI ZOO	6 THEATRE WC1	12 SO IT GOES	WHITE HART <i>WC1</i> (01-739 8024)
GATEMOUTH BROWN 13	THE PALADINS	19 (01-387 9629)	15 PRINCE OF	1 CLARK TRACEY QT
HALEM JAZZ & BLUES	NORWICH <i>Am Castro</i>	TRILOK GURTU	12 ORANGE 8E (01-2379181)	1 THEO TRAVIS QNT
BAND 14, 15	(0606) 666152)	BAND/HUMAN CHAIN	12 SO IT GOES	8 JERRY UNDERWOOD
BILLY BANG QT 15	ALAN STUART OCTET	29 QUEEN ELIZABETH	15 HALL 3E (01-328 88800)	28 EDDIE HARVEY
BRACKNELL <i>Wend</i> <i>Formal</i> (0344 484123)	<i>Ron</i>	CANTERBURY	15 FRED FRITH'S KEEP	1 JOHN BURGESS, ZURBOP
BUDDY GUY &	KEITH ROWE	7 ARMS 8E (01-374 1711)	19 THE DOG WITH ZORN, TENKO	29 VORTEX JAZZ BAR
JUNIOR WELLS/THE	THE FREE JAZZ	ANACRUSS	19 RONNIE SCOTT'S	1 N16101-234 05161
PALADINS/TAJ	QUARTET	5 HALF MOON	CLUB WT (01-439 0747)	8 DAVE NEWTON, DON
MAHAL/CLARENCE	TONY BEVAN, MATT	THEATRE ET	9 JIMMY McGRIFF, HANK CRAWFORD QT	11 WELLER
GATEMOUTH BROWN/	LEWIS, PAT THOMAS,	6 (01-799 4000)	17 RED RODNEY QNT	12 CLARK TRACEY QT
DR JOHN 14-16	ALAN TOLMISON	HFMITO PASCUAL	23 MICHEL CAMILLO	8 THEO TRAVIS QNT
BRISTOL <i>The Alton</i> (0272 271952)	14 DECTET	EDDIE HARVEY	17-22 HORACE SILVER QNT	29 JERRY UNDERWOOD
JAZZATHLON	<i>Jericho Tavern</i> (0865 54502)	16	31-12 Aug	8 SPIRIT LEVEL
JOHN BURGESS, JERRY	8 SHEFFIELD <i>Landball</i>	16 ROGEZ, JOHN	31-12 Aug	11 DAVE NEWTON, DON
UNDERWOOD QT 27	FRONT LINE	21 CORVELL, BIROLI	31-12 Aug	11 WELLER
CARDIFF <i>Four Bars Inn</i> (0272 340991)	ASSIMBLEY/FACTION	21 LAGRENÉ	31-12 Aug	12 ZURBOP
JOE TEMPERLEY 5	8 BEATINGS	21 JAZZ CAFE N16	31-12 Aug	13 ALEX McGUIRE QNT
FEVDO 8	<i>Merry Society</i>	1 STEVENS	31-12 Aug	14 MERVYN AFRICA QT
CLARK TRACEY	JOHN BURGESS TRIO	1 (01-359 4936)	31-12 Aug	21 POINTS ON A CURVE
GLASGOW <i>Festival</i> (041 226 3262)	11 STAFFORD <i>Gambler</i>	6 MERVYN AFRICA QT	31-12 Aug	21 JONATHAN GEE, DAVE O'HIGGINS
	<i>(0785 212017)</i>	6 ARGUELLES	31-12 Aug	23 HUMAN CHAIN
	IAN KIRKHAM	7 CLARKE, GEORGE	31-12 Aug	25 DAVE O'HIGGINS QT
	DICK PEARCE	8 DUKE DUO	31-12 Aug	29 DAVE O'HIGGINS QT
		10 MILES DAVIS	31-12 Aug	30 SIMON PURCELL TRIO



Off with a Bang! BILLY BANG plays for UK gigs this month. See page 105 for details. Photo by NICK WHITE

WOODY SHAW, 1944-1989

Michael Cuscuna mourns the passing of a trumpet master.

ON 9 May 1989 at the age of 44, Woody Shaw died of a heart attack as a result of internal injuries which he incurred falling in front of a New York subway train on a Monday morning in January. He was a master trumpet player and an excellent composer. Although he was never given the recognition in jazz (except by musicians and especially trumpet players) that he deserved, time will bear out his brilliance and originality. Perhaps the inevitable re-evaluation of an artist's work after his death will bring about the reassessment and highest degree of appreciation that his work deserves.

Born in Laurinburg, North Carolina on 24 December 1944, Woody moved to Newark at a very young age. His love affair with the trumpet began in school. The training that he pursued was more classical, giving him extraordinary control and technique as well as a beautiful sound. His chops were such that he could warm up in the kitchen at the Village Vanguard sailing through two octave scales with blazing speed at no louder than a whisper. Blessed with perfect pitch and a photographic memory, Woody devoured music. He loved the great impressionist composers such as Debussy and Ravel as much as he did the jazz greats. He studied Harry James as closely as he did Fats Navarro. He was always fascinated by any music that had great soul and intelligence.

Soul and intelligence certainly describe his music. Although he was influenced by Navarro, Clifford Brown, Lee Morgan and Freddie Hubbard, his passion for saxophonists, especially Coltrane and Dolphy, altered the way he approached his instrument. His style was very much his own. Those who have claimed him to be a Hubbard imitator are listening on the most superficial level.

Newark was a fertile ground in the late 50s and early 60s. Woody found many peers his age to play and develop with in high school including the late Larry Young with whom he was very close and from whom he learned a great deal.

His recording debut at age 18 was on Eric Dolphy's Douglas sessions. I remember at the time one reviewer (*in Down Beat*, I believe) who decided Woody Shaw was a pseudonym for Freddie Hubbard and proceeded to discuss the album on that basis. His next record was Larry Young's *Unity*, a masterpiece of a record which featured three excellent Shaw originals.

In 1965, he joined Horace Silver, gaining his first international exposure in the jazz mainstream. For the next five years, he worked steadily with Silver, Andrew Hill, Jackie McLean, Joe Henderson, McCoy Tyner, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea and Art Blakey. He also became something of a Blue Note regular on sessions by many of the above as well as Hank Mobley and Booker Ervin. He was in fact scheduled to sign with Blue Note when the label's sale to Liberty and the

subsequent retirement of Alfred Lion intervened.

Woody was not big on responsibility and he avoided taking on a career as a leader. But Art Blakey among others pushed him into the spotlight. After two albums on Contemporary in the early 70s when he was living in San Francisco, he resettled in New York in '75. He recorded steadily for Muse Records, then CBS, then Elektra, Enja, Muse again and also made two successful, non-competitive collaborations with Freddie Hubbard for Blue Note. Recording was a painful process for him. I must have produced at least a dozen albums of his. Out of that relationship came a long, rocky, deep friendship. It had to be deep since it weathered some rough personal and financial times for both of us. If we had a falling out, it usually lasted 24 hours and almost always resulted from my pushing him a little too hard to do more composing. He hated to write, but he was exceptionally good at it.

He led two great bands during the CBS and Elektra days. The first had Carter Jefferson on tenor, Onaje Allan Gumbs on piano, Clint Houston on bass and Victor Lewis on drums. The second had Steve Turre on trombone, Mulgrew Miller on piano, Stafford James on bass and Tony Reidus on drums. He loved having a band, an ensemble that he could shape, write for and count on. But he hated being a band leader with all its responsibilities and details.

His avoidance of responsibility caused his career to dip on many occasions. A couple of years ago, troubled, living like a nomad and indulging in too many chemicals, Woody slipped away to Switzerland where he taught at a music school in Bern. But he eventually ended up in Holland where the vices for which he had fled New York were in plentiful supply.

His eyesight, which had always been horrible, began deteriorating rapidly due to cataracts and retinitis pigmentosa. His weight dropped to an alarming level and he was found to be an AIDS carrier. Finally he was brought back to the home of his parents, Rose and Woody Shaw in Newark, where they took care of him with love and diligence.

Max Roach sent a limousine to pick him up and take him to Max's gig at the Village Vanguard. Later that night, Woody slipped away and headed for Brooklyn. No one knows who he was going to see or had seen, but at about seven am the next morning, he fell in front of a subway train, resulting in the loss of his left arm just above the elbow and internal injuries.

Because he was a perfectionist, was subject to profound stress and mood swings, Woody was never really happy unless he was making great music or spending time with his son Woody Louis. Woody is survived by his parents Rose and Woody, his sister Toni, his brothers Pete and Cedric, his son and all the magnificent music that he gave us. *



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NOVUS



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BEATING AT THE HEART OF JAZZ

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THE SOUND OF AFRICA

by Mark Sinker

NO ONE, I think, has taken so well to the upper-stratum of socially conscious worldrockdom as the Senegalese upstart YOUSOU N'DOUR. The pitfalls, which only begin with the pressure to turn into Sting, all dulled mass-market common sense, become very strange very fast — there's apparently a sect of Jehovah's Witnesses who worship Michael Jackson as the Archangel Michael abroad among us, for example — but N'Dour, an admirable mix of practical cool-eyed wisdom and compact sexual ambiguity, seems born for it.

Even so, it's instructive to compare him, once again, with the other great West African singer, the Malian SALIF KEITA — Keita's also been propelled out of the home-round into global attention: the cover-picture of *Sav* became a totem for the novelty-mystery of the Third World voice. Both have new LPs out — N'Dour's *The Lion* on Virgin, Keita's *Ko-Yan* on Mango — and both LPs have had time and money spent on them mindful of new and huge European/American audiences.

But where Youssou's absolutely laconic self-assurance shoots him high into pop hipster-starmanship, Salif already seems to be pushing away from the power his success could give him — "Yada", which opens *Ko-Yan*, is a troubled, edgy song; it seems only half-complete, and immensely expressive because of this. Elsewhere on the record his voice — which once soared as no one else's, a winged anomaly drifting over ancient seas — seems dense with fury, an anger he's only beginning to explicitly translate; for the moment it turns on itself, as much explosive doubt as open rage, and the surface of his composing technique breaks up, suddenly cloudy and impenetrable.

Nothing in music's past offers any adequate critical response to these two — the one appropriating the present with astonishing deftness, the other, always fascinated by histories we've chosen to ignore, suddenly possessed by them. New emotions spill into these grooves — other things, naive excitements we took from them as recently as three years ago (when, for example, I wrote features on each here in *Wire*), seem already irrelevant.

Some of this has overtaken JENNY CATHCART's invaluable Youssou pop-biog (*Hey, Yaw!*: Fireline Books), unfortunately — outdating the habit of taking figures like Gabriel and

Springsteen, these avatars of post-Lennon *soblesse oblige*, without very acute suspicion (not so much towards morives, I admit, as moral side-effects). Cathcart, a friend and — as important — a translator, is close enough to him to represent things exactly as he wants them, as well as filling in family and social background expertly.

This is welcome information, but it may already not be enough. N'Dour's own operation has been pretty slick — who's exploiting who, you might ask — and we ought to begin to note it, if we're to meet his true challenge. His record, unlike Salif's, is so seamless an absorption of all of the world's ethnic AOR that it's almost a put-on. I love it, same as I love him, because the way he does what he will without ever missing a beat is still a kick; that this gnarly global communication thing is just prestidigitation to him signals both his talent and his confidence. But he's still only toying with us. Salif, serious by nature, and a lesser figure, is giving everything.

ANCESTRAL VOICES

by Brian Morton

GRÉENE 'S IS always a little sourer than *Grow*, a little less ripe in its appraisals. Even so, who'd protest at the back-of-hand dismissal of "the twentieth-century Dutch musical renaissance, *such as it is*".

The context — and exception — is an entry on WILLEM PIJPER (1894–1947). If the Low Countries have been decidedly low-toned and flat, almost since Sweelinck, Pijper is a genuine musical mountain. Most of his MSS, including several unpublished pieces, were lost when the Germans passed Rotterdam in 1940; most serious was the loss of a tactical reduction of the over-blown second symphony of 1921 (eventually restored by Pijper's pupil Karel Mengelberg four decades later).

Pijper's reputation outside Holland rests on an occasional American parp through the popular Third Symphony (1926) and on a series of double-album sets released or reissued as "Composers' Voice Specials" by the Donemus Foundation. His later work is sparer and less bold than he might have promised. The events of May 1940 cut a swathe through his city and his ambitions. However, he had established a definitive style grounded in polytonality, unfixity of rhythm



and generated by what he called "germ cells", motifs or chords which would unfold like acorns into great orchestral oaks.

The Donemus recordings include (volume 3) all three symphonies; (volume 1) sonatas for violin, flute and piano, the fifth, unfinished string quartet; and (volume 2) the "opera" – actually symphonic drama – *Halewyne* (1933). There are two versions of the Six Symphonic Epigrams, composed in 1928 for the Concertgebouw Orchestra, and played by them (in 1954), also by the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Simon Rattle 30 years later. Rattle is slower but extracts more juice.

An able critic and teacher, Pijper breathed sufficient germ cells through the journals of conservatories to infect a new generation with musical longing. Much as Bibilo does to Norwegian music, the 57-year-old TERA DE MAREZ OVENS brings a flash of Iberian sun to Dutch skies, thus recalling the improbable days when Spain and the Netherlands were one polity. Her music (Composers' Voice 8702) is striking and modern, the *Sinfonia Testuval* (1987) a remarkably unpatronising tribute to the political detainees of Mexico and Chile. *The Litany Of (sic) The Victims Of War* (1985) bears comparison with the much better known Nancy van der Vate.

Bittier, but no less intriguing, is a set of piano pieces (Composers' Voice 8703) by young Dutch composers (JANSSEN, TERMOES, HOENDERDOS, WAGEMANS, EMMER), played by Guus Janssen (for it is he) and Gerard Bouwhuis. Nothing earth-shaking, but then, as far as music is concerned, Holland never was in the slide area. At least there's something here to stem the floodwaters of neglect.

* Willem Pijper: Composers' Voice Specials – Volume 1 Historic Recordings; Volume 2 *Halewyne*; Volume 3 Symphonies, etc (CVS 1987/1 a&b, 2 a&b, 3 a&b). Donemus Amsterdam, Paulus Potterstraat 14, 1071 CZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Distributed in the UK by Impetus Records, 587 Wandsworth Road, London SW8.

AMEN CORNER

by Nick Kimberley

WHEN PHIL Hardy and Dave Laing published the first edition of their *Encyclopaedia of Rock* in 1977, the entry for ERRA JAMES noted that she had "a career which falls into four distinct phases". At that time, Etta had been a rhythm and blues star for nearly a quarter of a century, long enough to deserve a sedate retirement, especially after some debilitating

drug experiences.

But here it is 1989, and Etta, as her 1974 funk hit proudly proclaimed, is "Out On The Streets Again", visiting Britain with a new album, *Seven Year Itch*, under her capacious belt. How many phases divide her career now? Eight, nine, more? Her most public moment was undoubtedly the rousing gospel song she performed as part of the opening ceremony for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. But, like the whole ceremony, her performance had something of Disney about it, as, swathed in flowing robes, she capered and cavorted like a demented holy roller – cartoon gospel.

After that, Etta slipped back into the latterday version of the chitlin circuit, emerging now with her new album, recorded in Nashville with an all-star line-up (but can anyone spot which guitar lick is Steve Cropper's, which Kenny Greenberg's?) The record is produced by Barry Beckett, who made a considerable reputation in the 60s as the keyboard player on hundreds of Southern Soul records cut at Muscle Shoals. Some of Etta's own best records benefited from Beckett's tasteful fills, yet we should be grateful that Etta and he have not attempted simply to remake tunes like "I Worship The Ground You Walk On" and "I'd Rather Go Blind". This way lies Golden Oldie Hell, home to too many ageing stars.

Instead, *Seven Year Itch* contains mostly covers of others' hits – hardly better, you might think. Yet when Etta tackles Ann Peebles' "Feel Like Breaking Up Somebody's Home", it's less a question of revivalism than of reinterpretation. The James voice lacks Peebles' subtlety, but the extra harshness is appropriate for such a supremely vengeful song. If Etta's voice tends to inflexibility, she's not afraid to flatten her notes to achieve country effects on a track like "The Jealous Kind". Etta is clearly a survivor – the credits even acknowledge the alcoholics' rehabilitation centre she has attended.

But what will her live show in London at the end of July be like? Too often, 50s stars are expected to perform as if 30 years of music history hadn't happened.

Is this the fate of singers like Etta, blasts from the past who don't quite fit the present? Londoners at least have plenty of opportunity to find out in July, as besides Etta James, we can look forward to a glittering array of 50s and 60s stars like Screamin' Jay Hawkins, Buddy Guy, Junior Wells, and a Malaco Records blues package with Bobby Bland, Little Milton and Johnnie Taylor. Are we "Back In The Same Old Bag Again", as Bobby Bland's 1966 song had it; or will we be reminded that a great rhythm and blues voice is a joy forever?

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but john harle is

determined to drag

traditional music -

of all kinds -

out of the museum.

words: andy hamilton.

photo: howard sooley.

DIVERSITY AND eclecticism are the key to John Harle's work. "I think I'm impure both in a jazz sense and in a classical sense. What I am is an amalgam of various things . . . I've always been a kind of musical magpie, in that I've found shiny objects and taken them. It's very predatory, but I cover my tracks." It's not that the British saxophonist is hard to pin down, it's just that by nature he's, well, a magpie . . .

We get closer to the real J Harle when we focus on his chosen instrument. "I've followed the instrument more than anything else . . . the only unifying factor is basically the saxophone." But when we consider Adolphe Sax's invention, we find a further problem of identity captured this time in a reptilian metaphor: "The instrument itself is impure, it's a hybrid of a woodwind instrument and a brass instrument. It is a chameleon, an instrument capable of great beauty, never the brashness of a trumpet but almost the brashness of a trumpet, never the purity of an oboe sound but almost . . . It can emulate the tone-qualities of the brass section and the woodwind section with ease."

So what sort of tone does John aim for? "I'm not conscious of producing any single type of tone now . . . But to me now the soprano is the expression of my personality." On the alto, his original instrument on which he received his classical training, he admits to a kind of "schizophrenia". He uses two different mouthpieces on it, one (now being phased out) producing a "commercial" tone (jazz standard post-Coltrane), the other – "much the most personal" – an almost classical purity.

We can hear the "commercial" tone in his obligato behind Dagmar Krause on tracks from her album of Eisler songs, *Tank Battles*. But this is not the saxophone voice readers will be familiar with from John's own recent and highly acclaimed duo albums with pianist John Lanchester. The first of these, *Habanera*, is a collection of mostly shorter pieces, a number of

them transcriptions. *John Harle's Saxophone*, in contrast, has real heavyweight material, including contemporary works some of them composed specially for John. These are both, I guess, "classical" albums. And as well as the "chamber" pieces, John is concerned to develop the classical concerto repertoire. But he is one of a group of young British musicians – Nigel Kennedy and Dave Heath are others – whose roots are essentially in classical music but who are interested in incorporating aspects of jazz and improvised music in their playing. His work in his new band shows this.

BUT ISN'T there meant to be a divide between classical and jazz? Don't classical "purists" (for "purist" read "clothes-eared") like his work for the wrong reasons? Here's critic Edward Greenfield suffering from the *Gramophone* magazine syndrome: ". . . like that of the finest jazz saxophonists [Harle's playing] directly echoes the inflections of the human voice, but his fine control of tone and vibrato eliminates the sloppy wailing which for classical ears can be such a pain" (*Guardian* 18.10.88). Charlie Parker, "sloppy wailing"? John offers his own diagnosis of the purist's aural discomfort. "The classical world has always looked down on the 'disposability' of improvisation. Also, classical music is not used to being put into the hands of the performer. It's in the hands of the composer, and there is something snobbish about a classical world that says a performer cannot be a composer – a composer at the moment of performance."

Because the sax is associated with jazz (ie a popular dance-band sort of music) there has been a problem getting it accepted as a serious solo instrument in its own right in the 'straight' repertoire. This is something Hatle himself is keenly aware of. At the Royal College of Music (where he studied 1978–81) his decision to specialise in saxophone was not

warmly welcomed, and the performance of a sax concerto was rejected because the instrument apparently had too many associations with dance halls, nightclubs and other low dives. He had similar problems with the discreet conservatism of the Paris Conservatoire, his second and final study-location. But John feels the picture has changed with the expansion of the classical repertoire – an expansion largely due to him, perhaps, in his relatively short period on the scene (he's 31).

Still, look at the Dominic Muldowney Saxophone Concerto – commissioned by the London Sinfonietta in 1984 and written for Harle, recorded and released on EMI last year. Isn't it "lighter" than the Piano Concerto by the same composer that it's paired with? Doesn't that problem of serious acceptance remain? John demurs.

"I think it's six and two threes. The Piano Concerto parodies early jazz-piano styles, ragtime – it's got a saxophone in the orchestra [but] for its Weillian colour . . . Although the parody of jazz styles is far more overt in the Sax Concerto, I'd agree. But within Dominic's music there's always been an element of parody, though I think since he became Musical Director of the National Theatre his concert music has taken on a lot more of the popular idioms than it ever did before."

Other major additions to the concerto repertoire are on the horizon. Double concertos by Robin Holloway (sax and clarinet) and Mark Anthony Turnage (sax and cello) have already been performed but await a recording. A Birtwistle concerto is in the pipeline. For soprano sax, strings and amplified celeste, "that piece is entirely in Harry's mind at the moment . . . It could prove as exciting as Harnenberger's *Endless Parade* of last year" (Birtwistle's trumpet piece).

Meanwhile, the chamber repertoire continues to occupy the saxophonist. John defends Richard Rodney Bennett's *Sonata* against Brian Morton's strictures (*Wire* 62), and he regards Michael Berkeley's *Kening* (also on John Harle's *Saxophone*) as a "fantastic piece". No hint of the instrument's low connections in that impassioned lamentation. Wonderful in a different way is the Phil Woods *Sonata* – a revelation to the present writer. Some parts of it seem to have an improvised feel, don't they? "That's because it is improvised . . . about 50 percent." Ah . . . The first two movements are remarkable, but John detects a slight falling off after that – "it promises more than it delivers". But it's still a much-loved part of his concert performances.

MENTION OF one jazz player's foray into "straight" music brings us to John Harle's forays into improvisation. In fact, they're well-established now. The saxophonist does have sympathy with another classical purist objection to jazz – its dependence on the "tired formula" of 12- and 32-bar forms; theme, solos all round and out. (Not only a classical purist objection, in fact.) In his composing/arranging, John wants to get away from this dependence; his interest in jazz is with those who feel the same way. He and friends Nigel Kennedy and Dave Heath "grew up together believing that Miles had shown the way forward". Davis' striving for the constantly

contemporary he tries to emulate: "I listen to *Tatsu*, *Sketches Of Spain*, *Porgy And Bess* . . . because those are examples of the musical ideas being greater than the sum of its parts. That's why as a jazz musician I am impure, because I'm not a small-group player," he adds.

He has recently formed a small group, though – even if it doesn't play small-group jazz. This is the John Harle Band, successor to the Berliner Band of the early 80s, but no longer playing Brecht/Weill/Eisler cabaret music. The approach is eclectic (of course) and electric. The now-familiar duo pieces with John Lenehan jostle with band arrangements of Ellington, Gil Evans, Bartok, Metheny and Harle himself – about half the pieces they play now are his. (As far as composing and arranging are concerned "Gil Evans represents the highest form of what I'm trying to achieve".) There's a Milesian commitment: "extended minor 9th chords, Coltrane harmony, against a rock rhythm . . . All in all it's a fairly hi-tech affair".

John Harle is very much the front-line, he plays mostly soprano, and there's a lot of improvisation. Of the other players, only bassist Paul Morgan is from a pure jazz background. Drummer Paul Clavis plays with the LSO, the London Sinfonietta – and Samantha Fox ("musically and emotionally challenging" is his verdict on that experience). The band expresses its leader's conviction that he doesn't fit into either the jazz or the classical tradition: "There isn't such a tradition for someone like me . . . That means creating my own scene."

John Harle is a very together musician. He lives with his wife and young son in a large house in Highbury which he owns, near the Arsenal football ground. He pays his tax promptly and knows his reviews by heart. If his career fails to prosper (which is unlikely) it won't be due to lack of promotional flair – there are always exciting projects simmering. He's just got back from a Japanese tour with Michael Nyman. The John Harle band are touring in July. Virgin Venture are interested in a long-term album deal. While I'm round interviewing, Christopher Logue phones with details of the Brecht/Weill songs for John's *Berlin Nights* at the Barbican on August 6th, with Kate Westbrook and Phil Minton. Oh, and there's something about a *Saxophone Mass* at the Guildhall (where John is Professor of Saxophone) – like Urban Sax, only when they all come together at the end it sounds great.

All this in the interests of a self-consciously *contemporary* music. John offers a coda: "There are hundreds of classical musicians who are content to see their music in a museum, there are hundreds of jazz musicians [read 'acoustic jazz revivalists'] who are content to see their music in a museum . . . To me, post-modernism has always meant plurality." John Harle, single-minded pluralist and eclectic, post-modernist subverter of traditions. ■

RECORDS

- Dominic Muldowney: *Saxophone Concerto* (EMI)
- Habanera (*Hamblin*)
- John Harle's *Saxophone* (*Hyperion*)

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Mose Allison

LONDON
PIZZA ON THE PARK

MISANTHROPY, Mose Allison seems to suggest, is a forgiveable, even charming little quirk. Most of the songs he performs have a distinctly bitter edge. Sometimes Mose even includes himself amongst the foolish people he scorns. But always there's that dry, warm voice, that amazing panistic facility to soften the blow, to remind us that we're only human, so what can we expect?

For his latest residency at Pizza On The Park, the pickup band consisted of Alex Dankworth on bass, Mark Taylor on drums — youthful but distinguished. I've always felt Mose should do more gigs solo, but he seems to prefer a rhythm team, and Dankworth and Taylor were discreet, able to follow their leader's sometimes idiosyncratic timing without fuss. Their solos were models of carefully unflashy construction, overseen by an avuncular Mose. But nobody was there to see the accompanists. The show began with a couple of instrumentals, showing off Allison's unique fusion of hillbilly boogie, blues, jazz and European classical.

Then there's the voice — which manages to tackle a bewildering mélange of songs from dozens of different musical styles, and yet achieve the balancing act of doing them justice, and always sounding like Mose Allison. Besides the long-established favourites ("Sevene Son", "I Live The Life I Love"), there was a dash of Nat Cole, some stuff from

the last Blue Note album ("Ever since the world has ended, I don't get out much any more"), and a country song written by John D. Loudermilk which provided the evening's highlight. John D. Mose suspects his wife is two-timing, but she has her excuses for always coming home sweaty and out-of-breath: as Mose told her, "You call it jogging, I call it running around."

The beauty of the song, and presumably one of the things that attracted Allison, is that, no matter how persuasive his performance, no matter how Mississippi-venomous he sounds, we can't be sure that the missus isn't just our jogging. Mose the ionist meets Mose the electric, and turns a witty country song into an Allison soap opera. It's a reminder of the distinctly literary intelligence of the man, and there were a few people in the audience picking up pointers for future use — Georgie Fame (of course), Van Morrison, even Edwards Paolozzi. Now there's an intriguing juncture, with his jagged collage of disparate elements from cultures that shouldn't mix, would you say Mose Allison is the Paolozzi of piano blues?

NICK KIMBERLY

Jannis Xenakis

THE GREEK FESTIVAL IN
LONDON
QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL

WHILE STOCKHAUSEN descends (ascends?) into his cosmic kindergarten, and Boulez occasionally manages to squeeze out a pale shadow of his earlier triumphs, Xenakis, whom the post-serial dogmatists still love to hate, remains fearlessly productive and endlessly inventive, with a fiery and uncompromising approach which many composers young enough

to be his grandchildren would do well to emulate. The central points of reference in Guy Protheroe's Greek Festival on the South Bank were Xenakis and a variety of folk ensembles from the regions of Greece, which underlined the 67-year-old composer's relationship, audibly closer in recent years, to the folk music past and present of southeast Europe.

This tendency wasn't obvious, however, at the time of *Eros* (1963–4) for piano and brass, the epitome of Xenakis' penchant for instrumental virtuosity on the brink of impossibility (over the brink, at the time it was written). Rolf Hind, at 25, has all the ability and energy to project the vertiginous speed and intensity of the piano part, even if he misses some opportunities for variety of attack. The brass of Spectrum, conducted by Guy Protheroe, must have played this work more times than anyone else; it's a rare pleasure to hear music as challenging as this played with such confidence.

Eros was preceded by *N'Shaw* for two female voices and ensemble, and the miniature *Pour Maurice* for male voice and piano. In *N'Shaw* the voices, harsh and guttural, sing a fractured Hebrew text in insistent rhythm, joined by four brass and frail, whispering cello interludes; the folk music is an imaginary (Balkan?) culture. *Pour Maurice* featured the unbelievable voice of Spyros Sakkas, whose ability to leap several octaves, in midphrase, between strident bass and howling falsetto has been an inspiration to Xenakis on several occasions.

He gave voice again during *Orestes*, one of Xenakis' longest works at over an hour, for a duet with James Wood on percussion in which Sakkas not only sings both sides of a dialogue between Cassandra and "an old man of Argos" but also

plays an amplified psaltery: the combination of sophistication with archaic power in Aeschylus' trilogy is fully reflected in Xenakis' homage to ancient drama. The remainder of *Orestes*, for chorus and ensemble, juxtaposes and combines ancient Greek chanting with instrumental music varying from bare rhythm (all the singers and players double on at least one percussion instrument) to some of Xenakis' most ungrateful tangles of microtonal glissandi, at the end opening out into a perambulatory free-for-all — in which the audience had been invited to make as much noise as possible.

James Wood conducted his New London Chamber Choir and Spectrum; here, as in his appearance as percussionist, he was totally in control of the whole mosaic-like spectacle — I doubt whether anyone could have combined the roles with as much success. The foyer was already alive with Macedonian folk music as the audience left; by the usual contemporary music standards (maybe even by real ones), a "good night out".

RICHARD BARRETT

Itchy Fingers The New Orchestra

LONDON
COVENT GARDEN
COMMUNITY CENTRE

THIS SECOND night of the Covent Garden Saxophone Festival was the first appearance in London by Itchy Fingers for over a year, and the first gig here since Nigel Hitchcock joined the quartet. The low-ceilinged hall of the Earlham Street Community Centre seemed acoustically ideal for the Fingers, intimate enough to allow the audience to savor the timbres of saxes and woodwind without much



Great synthesist SPYROS SAKKAS looks on the bright side Photo by DOMINIC TURNER

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intervention from echo or amplification, but not so small as to deaden the sound.

In between coveting Hitchcock's alto — some smart sax in black lacquer with silver filigree — and reeling at the bat prices (a taste of the Weimar Republic) I pondered on the ethos of all saxophone groups. As far as I am concerned it is a formula that needs no excuses, but its practitioners seem to doubt. So we hear the baritone laying lines in imitation of the setting bass, solo backed by figures evoking the conventional rhythm section and, at one point tonight, mimicry of snare and cymbals. This may have been less an unadmitted desire for the support of a drummer than a wish to show off technique, and along with the jokey titles the band's determined cleverness sneaks of what I think of as formidable ability in the service of superficial trickiness and an overall air of superficiality. Mercifully Itchy Fingers *are* not far down this road, and their two sets were highly entertaining.

The last set of the evening, by Joe Gallivan's new New Orchestra, turned out to be equally enjoyable. Predictably satisfying but unexpectedly accessible. Some two-thirds of the audience left during the first, somewhat abstract, number. They missed a lot of user-friendly music. Long-time Orchestra member Charles Austin was joined on tenor by new recruit John McMinn for the opener, but McMinn mainly stays with the piano, where he plays nice fat funky chords when the music gets basic and down-home — as it did on "Take The 'A' Train" and a Charlie Parker blues.

Austin blows with quiet assertiveness but this seemed to be a night for the band to let its collective hair down and Joe Lee Wilson, whose rich voice had filled a mid-evening interval set, finally joined in with his accompanist to swell the Orchestra to a six-piece.

BARRY WITHEREDEN

Terry Riley, George Brooks and Zeitgeist

NOTTINGHAM
UNIVERSITY GREAT HALL

THIS CONCERT on the first British tour by the indeed legendary Terry Riley was, for me, a great disappointment. What the hell has happened to the minimalist aesthetes? Reich composes for large, unwieldy ensembles and/or sounds like Mike Oldfield, Glass is all bombast and sugary musicals, Adams writes bad Mahler, while Riley now grooves to cocktail-bar jazz muzak. Any genre in art must develop and progress, or cease. Perhaps the latter option is preferable given that the consensus appears to be that to be bland is good. The music of this gig would have been just as at home in a penthouse bar with the audience sipping dry Martinis and discussing the weather as in a concert hall.

As far as one could tell from just a single hearing and the largely unintelligible programme notes, the music presented was a convenient agglomeration of old and new bits and pieces cobbled together as two large-scale "works": "The Room Of Remembrance" and "The Playground". The former featured Zeitgeist's lineup of keyboards, mallet instruments and saxophone, and for the latter piece they were joined by Riley on keyboards and Brooks on saxes. The playing was ex-

cellent throughout and there were some passages where the music jelled, took off and generated a degree of excitement. But there was none of the purpose, direction, sparkle or serenity that characterises the best of Riley and some of the other minimalists.

The considerable improvisational element in the two works heard was skilfully handled, but consisted of the fairly drab affair of linking the various sections and jamming over sundry chord progressions and tiffs. This would have been fine if the basic material had been worth the effort, but for much of the time it wasn't. These pieces were deficient in both material and structure. Likewise, Riley's "In C" may not be much of a "composition", nevertheless, in the right hands, a performance results in music with a powerful identity and which uses improvisation in a new and challenging manner. There is nothing more simple and banal than the material in "In C". It is the way it is used, the way in which the music is constructed from this material via a simple yet efficacious constructional technique, that creates the dense and complex contrapuntal kaleidoscope of that composition. That is the paradox that was minimalism.

STEPHEN HOLMES

New Music Theatre

THE GREEK FESTIVAL IN
LONDON
QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL

THE "PIANIST" walks with glacial slowness onto a darkened stage towards his instrument, observed silently by a small choir with a percussionist and accompanied by a gradual electronic crescendo on tape. He eventually

wrings out of himself the energy to stab once or twice at the keyboard; the now screaming chorus seems to be an amplification of his desperate and futile attempts to find some (any) kind of relationship with the piano; finally he gesticulates maniacally at the audience before staring exhausted into the auditorium as the sound dies down. What has been happening? However inexplicable, something almost unbearably disturbing: the performance art stripped bare and then anatomised, exposing its primitive and visceral "subconscious". Dangerous and unique.

Anaphorisis III: The Pianist was by Jani Christou, who belongs, if that's the word, with such figures as Parch, Nancarrow and Ives: someone whose oblique angle on any and all musical issues gives one a slightly different view of everything else. Christou studied philosophy with Wittgenstein and psychology at the Jung Institute, as well as composition; many of his extant works are unperformable owing to his not getting round to making usable scores before his fatal car accident at 44 in 1970. Luckily the first performer of *The Pianist*, Gregory Semitekolos, worked closely with Christou on the piece, and no doubt remains its only authoritative exponent.

In this music theatre double-bill, the much larger share of time was occupied by Vassilis Riziotis' chamber opera *In Silence* (if only . . .). The mixture of drab accompaniments meandering around slowed-down folk/modal gestures, textures combining speech and singing, and shifting stage groupings in a watered-down Robert Wilson style was morbidly captivating for a couple of minutes; only some kind of misplaced journalistic integrity kept me there until the end.

RICHARD BARRETT

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the beast bites back Jimmy McGriff is leading the

Hammond organ revival, aided by altonit Hank Crawford, Ben Watson meets

the soul survivors who say no to fusion and yes to the blues

Photo by Phil Cean

HANK CRAWFORD and Jimmy McGriff are a pair of veterans whose blues-based soul-jazz has never been more in vogue. However, fashion bites off something to chew on with such soul food, and those in need of sustenance need look no further. This is stuff from the heart of the tradition, a music whose consummate down-home swing is so strong and easy that it makes you wonder what went wrong with rock and its blues-boom antecedents. The music they purvey underpins most of our popular music; the paradox of finding a home in the roots-fare of musicians from Memphis and Philadelphia merely adds to the pleasure.

Central to the experience of their current quartet is the sound of the Hammond B-3 organ. Roadies refer to it as "the beast": it requires at least six people to shift, and its reliance on valve-amplifiers makes it both fragile and susceptible to interference from electronic "noise" in lighting rigs and stage monitors. Once in place, though, a well-miked Hammond is a formidable instrument, capable of blowing everybody off stage or coming with an inimitable bounce.

Born in Philadelphia in 1936, Jimmy McGriff established the Hammond as the party sound of the 60s with "I Gotta Woman" (an instrumental version of the Ray Charles song) which was a hit for the Sue label in 1962. Raw, urgent and frenetic, the single packed the emotional catharsis of a gospel service into a two-minute-23-second blast. In contrast, McGriff's albums on Sue revealed a searching musical mind, eager to explore all the possibilities of the instrument, from the emotional overkill of its trembling chords to the needling blues of single notes. The extraordinary *Tokapt* album compares favourably to *Sketches Of Spain* as an encounter with light music: McGriff never compromised. Rock and roll made the swing orchestra obsolete: here technology allowed a single keyboardist to riff like the Basie band on hear – all that was needed was a power socket.

THE ORGAN movement began in Philadelphia, but rapidly took black America by storm: the characteristic sound of a nightspot became a Hammond accompanied by tenor sax and drums (bass is provided by the organist on foot-pedals). McGriff tells of his first encounter, in 1949.

"Philadelphia was the leading city for the organ. Most of the major organ players are from Philly or close around. Wherever you went you heard an organ group. The first guy I met was Doc Bagby – he was the first to tell me, If you sit down and really put your mind to it, you can do it. I went in with my father to the matinée, and it knocked me out. After I heard him and watched him, I said, Jeez! I couldn't believe what he was doing. Just a three-piece – they had a line waiting to go in. I said, Gosh, how many people is there in there playing? Because it sounded like a huge amount of people. When I got in there I kept looking for the rest of them. My father was explaining that it was just three guys."

In harnessing electricity to the cause of swing, the Hammond encountered the same dubious relationship to jazz as the electric guitar. It is OK, conventional wisdom goes, as long as

it is not used to maximum effect. McGriff has no qualms about extracting all he can from the instrument, and if the shocking piled-on emotionalism of his climaxes is dismissed as kitsch it is by those who would limit jazz to a chamber distillation. Indeed, McGriff has been at pains to point out his base in blues rather than jazz.

"What I've hated is that they've labelled me as a jazz artist. I can play jazz but really I'm a blues artist. They're finally calling me King of the Blues Organ. But all these years, every time I would move up I would push Jimmy Smith – I could never get a hit. But since Milestone have labelled me a bit different, I'm starting to branch out, it's really taken off. I've been doing things with BB King, Albert Collins – other blues singers, like Lou Rawls at Carnegie Hall. I could never have got that if I'd kept the label of the jazz artist, they'd never have given it to me."

This is from a man whose versions of "Round Midnight", "Yardbird Suite" and Illinois Jacquet's "Robbin's Nest" are classics. Nevertheless, continual relegation to second place is shoddy treatment for an artist of his stature. McGriff's care with colour and timbre, born of an unrivalled familiarity with the stops, makes the electric beast a dragon of fire, seething with sensation and response: his chromatic shifts and runs beneath others' solos are quite unique. Frequently humorous and always vivid, they are the results of a strikingly *orchestral* imagination, in which Ellington's tone colours and an R&B drive find equal place.

McGriff has one of the most successfully *materialized* instrumental sounds in music, and it is one way of explaining the visceral impact of his playing:

"You can sing through a piano. Hank sings through his horn – that's what makes him different. The major horn players, if you listen to them, they're singing through the horn, not just playing. I can just play the organ and sound like any other organ player, but I try to voice it the way I'd sing. You have to do it that way. Again, I'd go back to the church thing. When you hear organ in church, what the choir is singing, you hear the organ singing the same kind of way."

HANK CRAWFORD, born in 1934 in Memphis, is possessed of a plangent, incisive alto sound that meshes perfectly ("Some alto players seem to skate across the top, like they're playing up there and I'm here, but Hank gets right into the tone of the organ," says McGriff) and is also an arranger of note, most famously for Ray Charles (he is on the *Ray Charles At Newport* album playing baritone, listed under his real name Bennie Crawford; Stockholm's Big Blues Band plays only Ellington, Basie and Crawford arrangements, he reports proudly). The soul movement spearheaded by Ray Charles looms large in the development of both players, and their alliance seems appropriate.

Crawford, though, does not wish to disassociate himself from jazz: "I grew up with guys who are now great players – people like Phineas Newborn, George Coleman, Frank Strozier, Harold Mabern, Jamil Nasser, and the blues brothers: BB

King and Bobby Bland. That's how we learned, playing Charlie Parker. I cut my teeth on bebop. When I got into high school I naturally wanted to be in a marching band, so I got a saxophone. This was the 50s, high school days. To get gigs we'd play the blues, country, jazz, gospel. It was the kind of town where all kinds of music were full-blown, quite an experience."

Crawford can be quite devastating. After a two-and-a-half hour set at the Leeds Astoria, when the dancers would not let the musicians go, the band played a spiritual – "Dear Lord" – and Crawford held the audience mesmerized with his swooping fervour.

Soul Survivors was an apt title for their first Milestone collaboration, and a glance at their careers in the 70s is instructive. During this decade, notorious for its inhospitality to real music, Crawford made several albums for the much-maligned Kudu label, Creed Taylor's late-night/easy-listening jazz label. These have actually worn very well. Though Taylor did not allow Crawford to arrange, insisting on his sumptuous house-sound, the label's faithfulness to a bluesy groove has outlasted all the techno-flash academicism and rockist rhetoric of fusion.

"I think Creed was very instrumental in saving a lot of musicians' recording careers – in the 70s the disco craze came in and there were a lot of crossovers. Traditional jazz was being put on the back-burner. What he did to us as instrumentalists was he showered us with great arrangements. Something that didn't usually happen for instrumental players – strings, big bands – you only hear that behind singers."

During the same period, McGriff was signed to Groove Merchant, though his relationship to the industry seems to have been rather stormier. When talking of record labels, McGriff refers to an oppressive "they" who continually cajole and distort his intentions. Certainly some of the Groove Merchant material is excellent, but the later records are tending towards fusion. McGriff, though, is incapable of playing without a trenchancy that is the opposite of jazz-rock daze.

"They tried that on with *Tail Gunner*, they tried to put me in with fusion type things and I said, No, I don't want to play in that. Groove Merchant were trying to pull me away from the organ – that's why I left them, why I split. Sonny Lester wanted me to get into synthesizers. I said, It took me all these years to learn to play the organ, and now you want me to play something else."

Even Milestone, who, at McGriff's insistence, brought in Rudy Van Gelder as recording engineer ("he knew the sound of the organ"), have provided too much "advice".

"I'm getting ready to leave Milestone too. They let me go only so high into it, then they say, hold on. They want me to do more jazz. It's not the record company so much as the promoter – he thinks in the 50s. He says, you remember this, you should do something like that. This is nearly 1990 and you're telling me to do something like I did in the 50s!"

Fighting the record labels to preserve his unique Hammond

sound, McGriff has to be aware of amplification and such technicalities. His *At The Apollo* actually preceded James Brown's historic live recording there.

"I had four pieces at the Apollo. They wasn't really up on how to make an organ, I had to explain that you had to mike the top of one loudspeaker and the bottom of the other. They did it and it filled the whole room."

McGriff used the possibilities of stereo early on, recording with two guitarists (fans of Ornette's doubling strategy with Prime Time would do well to check *Friday The 13th* – George Freeman in one speaker and O'Donel Levy in the other kick up some storm) and even two drummers. His new album *Blue To The Bone* sets Al Gray's trombone against the Hammond: each release carefully explores another aspect of sound.

THE CURRENT resurgence of interest in straightahead roots music has not gone unnoticed. McGriff's belief that the kids are giving up Hip Hop for blues may be a little far-fetched, but he is excited by the involvement shown by the audiences in the English tour, the contribution of the Elite Dancers in Leeds.

Despite the care with which he makes records (and the bitter complaints about record company interference and their failures to list personnel in the past) McGriff's idea of music is fundamentally one of spontaneity and live playing.

"Duke Ellington told me something a long time ago. I didn't understand what he said at first, but after the years went on it made sense to me. He said, any time you play an audience, don't look at that guy who's sitting there applauding, you want to find the guy who isn't, that's the guy who you play to, because if you've got him, you've got everybody in the room. And it works. I always look for that one person who seems to be down in the dumps, but they want to hear something. If you perk them up, it just generates, gets to the other people. I've seen it many, many times."

Crawford talks of his old high school band director (who named him Hank after a veteran local alto player) and of his daughter, the soul singer Dee Dee Bridgewater, and you realise that with these musicians the arbitrary categories – jazz, blues, gospel, pop – are just words for the music they play. It's like a taste of homecooking after too many meals in hotels. There is no faking the real roots fare. As Crawford says, "We've fused enough – until it's con-fusion. So people are going back to the roots – you can't beat the real deal." Amen. •

RECORDS

- JIMMY MCGRIFF "I Gotta Woman" currently available on *Sur Instrumentals*: 1959–1967 *The Beat Is On* (Stateside S860129). Other recommended albums: *Blues For Mr. Jolley* (Stateside S86015) *Take Up* (Sur LP103) *A Thing To Come By* (Solid State SS18060) *Fly Dope* (Groove Merchant GM5099) *Friday 13th Cook County Jail* (Groove Merchant PLE017) *Stamp Jazz* (Groove Merchant BM3109) *The Starting Five* (Milestone M9148) *Blow To The Bone* (Milestone). HANK CRAWFORD: *Ray Charles At Newport* (Atlantic) *Mr. Blue Plays Lady Sad* (Atlantic SD1523) *Wildflower* (CBS) *We Got A Good Thing Going* (CBS) *Hank's Book* (Kudu KU33). CRAWFORD & MCGRIFF *Soul Survivors* (Milestone M9142) *Stoppin' Up* (Milestone M9153).



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- 15.00-16.00 Brian Priestley Septet
- 16.30-17.30 Bill Le Sage Quartet
- 18.00-19.00 Harry Gold Pieces of 8
- 19.30-20.30 Tommy Chase Quartet
- 21.00-22.00 Jack Sharpe Big Band

PROGRAMME SUNDAY 30 JULY

- 12.00-13.00 Sax Appeal
- 13.30-14.30 Tam White
- 15.00-16.00 Tim Whitehead Band
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A long-distance duo with

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rings around the squares.

Interview: Brian Morton.

Photo: Andrew Potthecary.

IT'S A woman's voice, his wife's, that first comes on the answering machine, but then Anthony Braxton himself cuts in and a puckish "Good afternoon" chuckles off the dishes and down the wires from where it's still the crack of dawn.

It gives him an audible belt to be able to orientate himself so immediately to someone else's time zone. It shouldn't be surprising, for this is a Puck who aims to put a musical girdle round the earth in 40 minutes — a necklace of orchestras strung on satellite beams — who thinks in millennia, and whose project-laying has more to do with metaphysical projections than with fiscal '89. Not for him a finger-check or time difference.

They used to cut off his phone for non-payment. These days, it has become his (global) village pump. "I long ago gave up any idea of making any money from my music but, at 43 and soon to be 44, when I look back at my life, I have to think how lucky I have been to be able to document my music. I'm as excited by it now as I was when I was 11. I'm a professional student and if most times I can only have six hours rehearsal

with the musicians before a recording, instead of the six days or six weeks that I'd like, then . . .

"The music industry in the United States is still racially divided. There are still black charts and a mind-set that prevents meaningful communication between the Afro-American aesthetic and the European tradition. I count Schoenberg and Webern as my daddies, too."

THESE DAYS, as a professor at Mills College in Oakland, just down the road from where Schoenberg spent his last, surprisingly happy exile, the saxophonist has found something like a niche. He sounds (in person, in performance and on record) like a man who is taking stock of his life, gathering force for another extraordinary engagement with that complex interface of aesthetics. Braxton's work has never been more staggeringly ambitious and in some respects, never simpler and more crystalline.

"I am currently engaged in the internal expansion of my model, to connect all of my compositions into a tripartite



ROUD TAN STYLING

perceptual entity, a musical affirmation of the number three. It seeks to demonstrate three levels of discourse: the architectural, the philosophical, and what I could call the ceremonial and ritual."

Braxton's performances – notably since the "image music" of *Composition 113* – have taken on an aspect of rite, part-magical, part-questioning, with a consequent alchemical transformation of the purely musical material.

"There are three levels, the individual, awareness of the group, and purpose" – traceable to the Christian Trinity, or even to Ayler's version of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, as well as to the advanced mystical mathematics of the Nile civilizations, number theory, the "perfect time" of the classical composers (4/4 was profanely "common") – "and I'm building a system to determine the nature of all those hook-ups that allow any piece of mine to be either a solo piece, a chamber piece, or an orchestra piece. The individual performer has that range of choices. My ideal is that every piece should be 33.3% notated, 33.3% improvised, with the remainder in the realm of family intentions or purpose."

It's this complex synthesis of traditions that makes Braxton so important; he is closest to Cage in mixing the determinist strategies of the Viennese with the indeterminacy of pure chance; the only point where those two apparently contradictory impulses interact is in jazz music, and Braxton's ever more ambitious musical structures operate hand in hand with an ever more intense and perceptive reading of harmonic improvisation.

At present, he is working on the third in the *Trillium* series of operas. "I've been involved with it for three-and-a-half years with one year to go. I'm also developing a new class of structural materials, so it's a very exciting time for me."

He's in his fourth year at Mills.

"One of the nice things about my relation with them is their recognition that I have to get away. Simply to talk about music is not enough. There is no such thing as pure theory and I don't think it's healthy me to have a physical relationship with the music. Performing allows me to look at a problem from a multiple context of correspondence, as opposed to a monoplane context. If the physicists who are working in the field of chaos had more awareness of music, of creativity generally in this time period, then they would be aware of perceptual correspondences that will help us respond to the challenges of the next one thousand years."

TRY AS they might (and an example would be the recent packaging of a Braxton "bootleg" in a cover best fitted to the Ohio Players, circa 1974), it's difficult to constrain Braxton's music to the "race" categories that still apply in American culture. "The jazz business is still premised on certain social presuppositions, distorting the African aesthetic in such a way that it is not allowed to use the European mystical tradition."

Braxton's attempt to square the circle has led him to a fairly tugged confrontation with materialism. "I'm very interested in

the challenge of electronic music. I'm in the process of clearing old debts" – he doesn't make it clear if these are strictly financial – "in order to take on new debts. People like myself who are poor are only now able to acquire some of these technologies. While I'm fascinated by the process, I've no desire to separate myself from my body. I need my Warne Marsh records and my John Coltrane records and my Paul Desmond records."

The late Marsh is – superficially, at least – Braxton's most surprising essential resource, until one recognizes anew just how closely Braxton's work does depend, however tangentially, on the harmonic series.

"Warne's music touched me very young, 11 years old. I played it all day yesterday. Warne was never respected because there was no slot for him and because he wasn't trying to be an African. He and Lennie Tristano were individuals whose work reflects on that European mystical tradition in a post-Parker context. All of these gentlemen approached their music with single-minded dedication."

It's possible to argue that there was in that gentlemanly single-mindedness just some of the sterile seed of its own limitation.

Braxton is impressively and unaffectedly feminist and his personal voice – like the rapid interphase of voices on his phone – depends increasingly on a subdominant of femininity. He makes a stronger case for the *Anima* than Judy Chicago's famous *Dinner Party* or Germaine Greer's schematic *Obstacle Race*.

"We are coming to a point when it is not possible to move forward as a species into a new time phase without recognising the great works of our women masters. This is the gateway to the next thousand years."

He expresses a deep admiration for Hildegard of Bingen, the 12th century healer, mystic and composer, who felt herself to be a "feather on the breath of God" and articulated a sense of cosmic and physical harmony unequalled before Cage or Stockhausen or Messiaen. "I'd like to say that Hildegard is as important as Johann Sebastian Bach. Yeah, put that in."

The breadth of Braxton's reference is staggering. The quiet confidence with which he expresses it, reassuring. Though always conscious of the jeopardies that face the pioneering artist in a fragmented and hierarchical society, he seems to have attained some sort of dynamic equilibrium.

"I feel very grateful that I discovered early the role models that will allow me to work for the rest of my life – and still be frustrated."

SOME RECENT AND FORTHCOMING RELEASES

Quartet (London) 1985 (*Lev*)

Composition 96 (*Lev*)

Solo (London) 1988 (*Septet*)

Compositions 99B, 101, 107 and 139 (*Bar Art*)

Seven Compositions (Trio) 1989 (*Bar Art*)

Ensemble (Victoriaville) 1988 (*Vnisi*)

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he who hesitates . . . er . . .

Old Bill's a pure-vitter on guitar;

but a Mr Plod with the verba;

Can he finish his sentence before

Jonathan Cee's tape runs out?

Photos by Ginn Spry

BILL FRISELL may be a great guitarist, but he hasn't got the hang of this self-publicity business at all. I mean, the man just has no idea how to make an impact. He's too polite, for one thing. Too accommodating. Thinks too hard before answering questions. Hasn't anyone ever told him that journalists aren't taken in by this sort of behaviour?

On the occasion of this interview, for instance, he certainly did himself no favours. We breezed into the lounge bar of his



hotel, the three of us – interviewer, photographer and designer – sat down, put our feet up, and peremptorily announced that we wanted to take some pictures of him up in his room. (His bathroom, to be precise.) Inwardly I cowered as I imagined the sort of response that, say, Miles Davis or Keith Jarrett would make to this suggestion. Would he go the whole hog and kick us out onto the street there and then, or would we be let off lightly with nothing worse than a stream of colourful abuse?

"Sure," said Frisell amiably. "That's no problem."

He led us up onto the fourth floor and along a sequence of labyrinthine corridors so long and tortuous that it would have made Mervyn Peake's *Gormenghast* look like a Wendy house. Safely installed in his room, my companions set about making some basic preparations for the picture-session – taking all the furniture out, installing floodlights, re-tiling the bathroom, that sort of thing – while Bill looked on with a certain amount of bemusement. But still no disapproval. And all the time I was wondering: what's with this Mr Nice Guy stuff? Where does he think it's going to get him?

It's particularly disconcerting to find that the man responsible for some of the scariest and most unearthly noises ever to be called forth from six strings and a block of wood should turn out to be so mild-mannered in person. To look at him, you'd think that the meanest thing Frisell could think of doing with the guitar would be to strum the chords of "I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing".

We were in the right room, weren't we?

N O B O D Y P I A Y S the guitar like Bill Frisell (yet), and by the same token, I've never met anyone who talks quite like him either. Before we go any further, there are some things you have to know about Frisell as Interviewee:

1 At times his conversation sounds like one of his solos: that is, just as he delights in dismantling the syntax of the orthodox guitar solo, so he has little time for the syntax of ordinary speech. He'll start a phrase, get half-way through, grow bored with it and then start off on a different one which is often only obliquely connected. If this is one of the techniques which makes him intriguing as a guitarist, it also means he can be a real headache to transcribe. Then again, this was at the end of a six-week tour. Perhaps he was just tired.

2 He speaks at the rate of about a word every five minutes. I realised immediately that I'd made a terrible mistake in turning up at the interview with only one tape in my machine. Interviewers meeting Frisell should come prepared with at least a five-pack of C120s. The traditional three dots aren't always enough to do justice to the length of his pauses, so now and again I've stretched it to six.

3 Occasionally there'll be an even longer pause than usual. When this happens, you know that he's searching for some elusive word. You try to guess what it's going to be, but invariably he comes down on something completely different: relying on the hunch (again, in speech as in guitar-playing) that sometimes the only way to surprise people is to state the blindingly obvious.

I T W A S beginning to look as though our photographer would have to call in a team of expert plumbers before the bathroom was in a fit state for the perfect snapshot, so I decided it was time to get Bill talking. I fired my first killer question – "Why did you leave ECM?" – and settled back to adjust myself to the Frisell rate of delivery.

"I just needed a change," he began, picking his way through the words with extreme caution. "Like with the latest record it's . . . I never could have done anything like that with ECM. I mean the whole process was so different. I had much more time, and there was a lot of different people involved, and we had three different producers on the record, and . . . The record I did before was not produced by Manfred [Eicher, ECM supremo] . . . But basically what would happen with me was it was more . . . It was always done really fast, in one or two days, you didn't have really much time to . . . I mean, I like doing things that way, I'm not putting that down, and Manfred is . . . his way of dealing with that situation is . . . I mean he's incredible in the studio for using that process, but I just wanted to try something else."

The new LP, *Before We Were Born*, was recorded for Elektra. As David Ilic pointed out in his review (*W/M 63*), it's very much a Frisell sampler: the line-up varies from track to track and there are only two songs credited to the band with which he's just been touring – himself, Hank Roberts (cello), Kermit Driscoll (bass) and Joey Baron (drums). It's hard to take in all at one go. One minute you're listening to country and western, then it's neo-industrial rock, then it's a spaced-out blues, then it's free improvisation, then it's a tango. But Frisell maintains that this haphazardness is deliberate. Over the last few years he's played with Paul Bley, John Zorn, Power Tools, Paul Motian, Wayne Horvitz and Jan Garbarek (among others) and influences like that don't just go away.

"First when I started this group it took a long time before we could record . . . That was one frustration . . . things moved really slowly." (I know the feeling.) "But now this is a chance for me to take all the things I've learned from playing with all these different people, and sort of focus it into one . . ."

Here we go area, perhaps? Entity? Organic structure? ". . . thing."

He admits, though, that the format of this album was partly dictated by the record company.

"The idea for that record, the first germ of an idea, was when I went to talk to Bob Hurwitz [executive producer at WEA]. When I was looking around for a company to go to, I went and talked to him, and . . . I had all these ideas, like for different records . . . like – I want to do a record with Arto Lindsay, and I want to do a record with John Zorn, and . . . He said up to this point, he didn't feel that I'd made a record that really showed what I did . . . He said that you had to listen to about ten different records to sort of . . . get the picture. So he wanted me to try to pull a few desperate things together."

Hold on! Let me just rewind the tape here. Surely he said

desperate things?

" . . . pull a few desperate things together . . . " No? Oh well, I suppose it fits, in a way. OK, carry on. ". . . and put them in one place, so that you could get just a more broad view of what it is I do. But it was hard . . . I still don't know . . . I mean it is made up of a lot of different . . ." Styles? Genres? Ingredients?

". . . things, and it was really hard to try to make it into one record."

At this point Bill was finally summoned into the bathroom to adopt the pose in which you can now see him adorning the cover of this magazine. He disappeared, as unflappable and co-operative as ever, and returned, still beaming, a few minutes later.

IN THE meantime I'd been mulling over one of the nagging contradictions inherent to his music. There's the anarchic, deconstructivist impulse which leads him to hang around with Zoen, Lindsay and pals, but there's also what Brian Morton (*Wire* 36) identified as his feel for the *architecture* of songs, his "virtuosity of deep structure". Hearing Frisell talk about the band, it becomes more and more obvious that this is a conscious tension, one which he has chosen to live within, although naturally enough he finds it hard to articulate the precise nature of his goals.

"During this tour — because this is the most we've been able to play — it's becoming more . . . whole, somehow. That's what I was hoping. It's not like . . . well now there's a bebop tune, and there's *this*, and . . . I mean each piece we play has its own character, and everything, but they're becoming a little more organic. We're using elements from other parts of our vocabulary, but . . . it's getting more evenly distributed through what we do."

So is that what he actually wants to happen?

"Well, I like the idea of going from one place to a drastically different place, but with the group . . . I want to be able to do that, I want to be able to shift gears, turn completely around, but at the same time I want it to have some clarity, or . . . There has to be some kind of a line going through it. I think that's starting to happen now, a little bit. But it's a long . . ."

Struggle? Time coming? Day's journey into night?

". . . process."

Perhaps Frisell's compulsive eclecticism, his rooted unwillingness to stick with one particular style, goes right back to his days in Colorado when, as well as listening to a lot of blues and surfing records, he used to scan the area's one jazz station for something that would catch his attention.

"They would play things like Coltrane's 'My Favourite Things', or some Kenny Burrell things or Jimmy Smith, so I started to hear bits of things that way."

Only "bits of things", you notice. Even now he finds it hard to name individual players whose current work he finds inspiring.

"I just listen to the radio, or I'll see videos on television or

something . . . You know, and there's a lot that doesn't really interest me, but then there are things that jump out." Suddenly he remembers someone. "Lately in the last few weeks I've been listening to a tape of John Hiatt. A friend of mine said check this out, and I've really kinda got into that. These songs, you know, kinda country songs, and the words . . . I just love that stuff."

F R I S E L L C R A V E S stability as much as anyone: the stability of family life, of knowing where his next gig is coming from, of having a chord sequence to follow. At the same time, there's a part of him which enjoys living dangerously. (He talks fondly of working with Paul Bley where "There's no rehearsal at all. Not even a word about what we're going to do. He'll talk about anything but the music.") It's probably in a domestic context that this contradiction is most acute.

"My wife and kid came for part of this tour, and were with me for a couple of weeks, which helps . . . But even that's difficult, I mean all the travelling and everything . . . One side of me wants to just be home in one place, and to be with them, but then also to be playing here is . . . It's incredible. Especially the last tour where I'm doing my own music."

He seems relieved that he has now built up the kind of following which means that gigs can be booked a year or more in advance. But with music as spontaneous, as adventurous as this, isn't even that element of security counterbalanced by the thought that the band just mightn't be sparring off each other by then.

"A little bit, yes, but when I got this band together . . . I mean it took me years and years to finally decide on this group. I was thinking about it for some time. I was thinking and thinking, and trying different things, and . . . I've known these guys for a really long time. Kermit and Hank and Joey . . . it's been 14 years or something that we've played together in some kind of way or another, and we're all . . . they're like my best friends, too, so . . . I really wanted to put something together that I was sure of, not just to do like one record and then let it go. I really have hopes that we can do it for a long long time. Because it just seems so rare these days when you hear . . . I mean there's something really special that happens when people have played together for a long time . . . These days it seems like it's always . . . every year somebody has a . . . it's some guy's name and he's got a different bunch of people playing with him, y'know."

Altogether, Frisell radiates trust — both musical and personal — in his three sidemen. This was what clinched it:

"I needed to have guys that could play in almost any style, or they could go in all kinds of different directions, and then I also needed to have people that are . . . personally, you know . . ." He laughs shyly, and then springs the biggest surprise of all: "We all love each other."

And the crazy thing is — he means it. Not a trace of irony. Not a hint of embarrassment.

I mean, what is the *matter* with this guy?



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Howard Mandel reflects on a sad month for music.

MAX GORDON was an 86-year-old who'd run the Village Vanguard since 1934 — first as a basement bar for poets, folkies, cabaret folk, comedians (Lenny Bruce and Lord Buckley among them), but from the mid-50s on, for jazz. The wizened, grumpy Gordon walked the steep steps down into his internationally renowned nightclub almost every evening, talked to pretty girls, suffered eager journalists, took a chair by the door, often fell asleep.

Max had his biases — what octogenarian doesn't? He told Andrew Cyrille, "You're a great drummer, but not a jazz drummer," and he refused to book most avant gardists, world music types and fusionists, preferring song forms, horns and piano, and strong rhythm.

Gordon's preferences still typify late-hour New York. And something about the Vanguard's weird wedge-shape, or the ambience that spreads from its foodless kitchen through odd nooks and crannies over its tiny square tables and back to its curved, muraled rear wall makes for great recordings: Coltrane, Rollins, Dexter Gordon, Eddie Jefferson, pianist Bill Evans, Kenny Burrell, Monday's Thad Jones-Mel Lewis orchestra, and many more were caught *Live At The Village Vanguard* (the title of Gordon's autobiography).

Gordon died 11 May after surgery. His wife Lorraine, who's helped with bookings in recent years, continues the usual policies. Tommy Flanagan, tenorist Teddy Edwards, and the Mingus Dynasty band have played the Vanguard since Max's demise. The place feels pretty much the same. Maybe the tourists don't realize we're missing the old man who fell asleep at the door.

TRUMPETER WOODY Shaw had been ailing for years, losing his eyesight and perhaps his perspective. In the 70s he'd had it all: a burnished sound, technical command, the blessings of Dolphy (with whom he recorded *Iow Man* when he was 17), a feel for advanced funk (check out Larry Young's *Unity*), unique compositions and a crack band of his own.

Shaw was raised in Newark, New Jersey, and picked up the trumpet at age 11. "He couldn't wait to get out of school, start playing," recalls Freddie Hubbard, six years Shaw's senior and his predecessor with Art Blakey, Herbie Hancock, Joe Henderson, Dexter Gordon. "Some guys are like that. Some can handle it, and some can't. Woody grew up too fast." (See Michael Cuscuna's appreciation on page 10 — Ed.)

Phineas Newborn Jr.'s father led a big band in a club on Beale Street in Memphis, Tennessee. Young Phineas played sax, trumpet, French horn and vibes besides piano. He came out of Art Tatum, Teddy Wilson, R&B and the gospel church; he pursued two-handed virtuosity rather than the styles of Bud Powell or Monk. In the 50s he toured widely, appeared with Mingus in John Cassavetes' film *Shadows*, and won over New York.

The bespectacled, professionally dapper Newborn was an anomaly, but revered as such. He recorded for Atlantic and Contemporary, and moved to Los Angeles in the 60s. Ill health kept him inactive for long stretches, but when he came to Sweet Basil in the 80s, keyboardists such as Cecil Taylor would sit at his feet. Newborn, 57, died in Memphis on 26 May. Memphis expatriates George Coleman and Harold Mabern dedicated their Fat Tuesday sets to his memory.

Steve McCall was best known as the gracefully athletic drummer for Air; in fact, he worked with all the AACM, as well as solo, blues and bebop gigs and, in '85, with Cecil Taylor's Unit. Returning to his hometown, Chicago, in the late 80s McCall led sextets with local heavies. He partied heartily, and died of a stroke in late May. He was 56.

THREE DEATHS weren't the only transitions of spring into summer, '89. John Zorn recently led "Cobra", one of his most complex game pieces, with a new crew of improvisers on electronics. The Knitting Factory, which released its first anthology of live recordings on A&M, has opened a tiny Knot Room for performances that won't interfere with upstairs. The Knit presents itself uptown as part of George Wein's JVC jazz festival during June — and hosts its own alternative fest downtown at the same time. A high-ceilinged, heavily draped chamber in the Blue Willow, a restaurant in a 19th-century bank building on Broadway and Bleeker, has opened for bi-weekly concerts, often featuring jazz women.

Visiones bought a grand piano. Indigo Blue struggles on with fine talent but small crowds. Cafe Gianluca and Birdland are happening venues on the Upper West Side. In three months I've seen three jazz docs. Bruce Weber's slick and amoral *Let's Get Lost* on Chet Baker, Charlotte Zwerin's faithful *Straight, No Chaser* compilation of Monk footage, and John Holland's amusing Cuban trip with Dizzy Gillespie, *A Night In Havana*. Now we're getting hot.

STILL SMALL VOICE OF CALM

Bobby Hackett played some of the purest trumpet in jazz.

But it's mostly hidden in tough-guy dixieland or sugary string-sections.

Martin Gayford reports on the nice guy who never really found his niche.

THERE HAS always been a small, devoted group of players whom other musicians look on with special affection and respect, rather as an Irish family does on the brother who becomes a priest. They may not be the stars, or even the biggest influences, but through their single-minded zeal they help to keep the faith alive: Fats Navarro, for example, who, as Charles Mingus noted, was "one of the purest". Another, though one would hardly guess it from his years of work with boisterous dixieland outfits, sugary string-sections and society dance bands, was the trumpeter, cornettist and guitar-player, Bobby Hackett.

Dedicated as they are, this group tend to have an underdeveloped sense of self-preservation; a trait which quickly brought Navarro to the grave, of course. Hackett, although he overcame his early alcoholism and lived to be 60, was scarcely more fortunate. A tiny man who resembled a shrunken mafioso, he was by all accounts uncommonly generous-hearted, and correspondingly bad at business. Throughout his life he showed a positive gift for missing opportunities. It was typical that his promising big band foundered because half the musicians were too drunk to turn up for a vital audition. Typical too that when he did score a success he managed not to benefit from it. Thus his little solo on Glen Miller's "String Of Pearls" was known the world over, but few realised who had played it; and the recordings he made with strings were used to soothe the customers in every supermarket in America, but it was the promoter, Jackie Gleason, who became rich, not Hackett.

So Hackett's career meandered along from jazz to recording studio, with ignominious spells of work for Horace Heids and Lester Lanin, the Victor Sylvesters of Long Island weddings, in between; but the admiration of his peers never faltered. Virtually every other trumpeter considered him a paragon; not only, as one might expect, players from the same general stylistic area — Louis Armstrong, Rex Stewart and Doc Cheatham, for instance — but also leading figures from the next generation, such as Miles Davis and Dizzy Gillespie. They all praised his impeccable technique, his rhythmic deftness, his harmonic subtlety, above all his power to improvise melodic lines so intricate, nearly constructed and

flowering as to constitute self-sufficient compositions in their own right. Like Fats Navarro, Hackett might well have said his ambition was "to play a perfect melody of my own, all the chord progressions right, the melody fresh and original". In fact, he told Whitney Balliett something rather similar: ". . . the key to music, the key to life, is concentration . . . the ideal way to play would be to concentrate to such an extent that all you could hear was yourself, which is something I've been trying to do all my life, to make my music absolutely pure".

Undoubtedly, one of the reasons why Hackett's music failed to register much outside the inner circle of musicians is that, in order to appreciate it, you have to concentrate, just as he concentrated when he played. If you only lend him half an ear, he sounds pretty enough, but light-weight. He didn't play loud and he didn't play particularly high; in fact he seldom left the middle register. His tone was burnished, but not especially large. He never used violent emphasis, or tonal distortions, had little blues-feeling, and avoided all the devices by which a soloist grabs the listener's attention. Instead he simply unfurled long, winding lines whose emotional colouring was no stronger than a calm happiness or an autumnal melancholy, and of which half the beauty lay in the details: miniature wonders of rhythmic acrobatics, unobtrusive harmonic legerdemain. Such a frail musical plant needed exactly the right conditions if it was to flourish: unfortunately Hackett didn't often find them.

FOR MUCH of his career Hackett adhered to the school of boozy, tough-guy dixieland whose spokesman and ringleader was Eddie Condon. Hackett was introduced into this circle by his friend Pee Wee Russell when he arrived in New York in 1937 at the age of 22, and he never really left it. In the late 30s and early 40s, Hackett constantly played in Condon's groups, Condon played in Hackett's, and the rest of the crowd (Russell, the trombonist Brad Gowans, saxophonist Bud Freeman *et al*) played indiscriminately with either. Most of the time they performed the same tunes in the same way: a hard-bitten New Orleans-style ensemble at either end, and a

Bobby Hackett (left) with Louis Armstrong and friend in New York 1952
Photo by Bob Parent, from K. Ade's Jazz Giants collection, published by Cadence Books, at £1.50



HAT HUT RECORDS PRESENTS

FRANZ KOGLMANN

ORTE DER GEOMETRIE



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It's

hard to build an international reputation in the arts - to overcome preconceived notions of geography, culture, society and politics. It's even harder to do it in Europe. European music has not yet found its place in America; has had to come to terms with patterns of European bias and tradition - while Europe desperately (and often successfully) strives to forge distinctive styles within that relatively recent American art form.

The Vienna composer/violinist/flutist Koglmann certainly warrants such international attention. However, he is working under an additional handicap - his music cannot be categorized under a single label. While he has been called "an international minimalist," his music is a complex amalgam of the previous four. *CD About Yesterday's Ezethetics* is a singularly rewarding example. He is not in the common usage of the term a "pure" minimalist, nor is he to be categorized as classical since he departs the root musical language of the past. His music is a synthesis of influences inspired by post-WWII classical. His view of music is philosophically ascetic and conceptually vigorous. The combinations of sounds he involves are exhilarating and unique. He is in debt to no single time or place style or theory as his work is a synthesis of influences from all over the world. His music is a vision which a highly perceptive - and the more commanding for that he is in others words - individual.

And yet he cannot be discounted. Like his pianist colleague, Werner Müller, he has a clear, bright, lucid and fresh style. The critic Harry Rabinowitz in *Spin* says: "Koglmann's music is 20th century modernism. The city of Johann Strauss in *Send-Sperrena* is also the city of Schlossberg and the Koglmann has transformed the concept into 'the Community of Life.' But Müller's music is more like the reclusive, withdrawn, melancholic tone of the compositions such as a potentially schizophrenic silence myself. His music reflects his philosophical choice: contemplation rising out of an inner combustion and not ventilation in a pure mechanistic mode. Episodes of aggression are rare, but when they do occur, they are powerful and explosive, explosive in the most remarkable unexpected ways. Expressive properties of color and texture, arrangements of clarity and density, atmosphere, all with an unassumingness of behavior and agency that triggers subconscious emotions, like the secret of a well-constructed trapdoor or the art of embroidery, man or machine.

Koglmann's music is an exuberantly elusive and emotionally generous because he can draw from many places, revealing a kinship with other arts, with learning, education, and the sciences.

From Koglmann has spoken of a concept "widely European, possibly

Austrian, perhaps unique to Vienna or himself" ("precision in melody")

I don't presume to understand it, nor do I need to. I can sense a particle of it in his music. It is a concept of precision, of control, of the balance of

individuality, the necessary loneliness of the individual, the fulfillment of one

That this music can be gleaned from mere sounds in the air makes their

creator worthy of attention, respect, and admiration.

— Art Lange
January 1989

FRANZ KOGLMANN

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New Note

row of (brief) solos in the middle, and the results, though repetitious, were exhilarating.

This set-up, however, did not really suit Hackett. His intricate contributions tended to pass by unnoticed in the burlyburly, and he didn't go in for the same sort of driving lead as Max Kaminsky, Muggsy Spanier or Wild Bill Davison. Although a good deal of Hackett's work was in this idiom, he only really shows to advantage on the slower pieces, most of the best examples occurring on three LPs he recorded in the 50s, two with Jack Teagarden, *Coast Counter* and *Jazz Ultimate*, and one with Condon, excruciatingly entitled *Bixeland*. On the latter date Davison was employed, sensibly, to play the up-tempo numbers, and Hackett only appeared on the others, on one of which, "I'm Coming Virginia", he produced an utterly spellbinding solo. Starting at a peak, it circles majestically down and down through phrase after phrase and bar after bar in one serene, long-breathed statement.

He wasn't really much like Beiderbecke, though, in spite of the name of the record. The comparison had frequently been made, of course, and Hackett was engaged to impersonate Bix at Benny Goodman's famous Carnegie Hall Concert in 1938, but the resemblance was superficial. Admittedly, there were moments when Hackett sounded uncannily close to the lost hero, especially in the days before he switched from cornet to trumpet, but it was a question of tone and detail, an inflection here, a note there. At heart, their styles were quite different. Bix's music was rhetorical, based on the conflict between flaring climaxes and hesitant, rubato qualifications. Hackett, in contrast, was calm, tranquil and self-contained.

While Beiderbecke rose confidently out of the most jumbled ensemble, Hackett was in danger of being swamped, and showed to better advantage on the occasions when he strayed away from dixieland to play within the elegant conventions of swing. The best of his early work, I think, comes from a session under his own name from 1938 on which the band, although made up of Condionites, riffed through polished little arrangements in the style of, say, the John Kirby Orchestra. Against this background, on "Ghost Of A Chance" and "Poor Butterfly", Hackett's solos are sighing, reflective and full of unobtrusive complexity: exemplary specimens of his style, in fact.

His own performances with the large orchestra he organised the following year were equally impeccable; but the band was a sleek, well-groomed affair, and the general effect was altogether too pipe-and-slippers. Ideally, he needed a partner, a little sharp seasoning to set off his own unrefined brilliance. This he found in Lee Wiley, a singer who combined buoyant phrasing with a wordly-wise air: *Midnight In Manhattan*, the record they made together, is one of the summits of jazz singing, as flawless a blend of voice and obbligato as Billie Holiday with Lester Young. Pee Wee Russell was also perfect as a counterpart, but though they frequently worked together, nothing, as far as I know, was recorded except their early collaborations in dixieland groups. The albums with Teagarden each contain one, glorious duet, and he made a fascinating

LP with Gillespie, but it was not until the late 60s that he worked and recorded regularly with a suitable musical mate: the trombonist Vic Dickenson.

The two of them made a wonderful double-act. When setting out a theme, for example, Hackett would execute a seamless exposition of the melody, while Vic would gently rub it up the wrong way with burry, interrogative phrases, rasping counterlines, and an occasional raspberry. Both were musician's musicians with infallible techniques and extraordinary memories for tunes, and both thought the other was marvelous. Indeed, Dickenson once said that out of the legion of players he had encountered in the course of a long and busy career, he had most enjoyed playing with Hackett and Lester Young.

A surprising and interesting pairing. Perhaps the qualities that Dickenson detected were the same as those that impressed the youthful beboppers. Certainly, and also a little surprisingly, they too listened to Hackett. As Little Benny Harris, the trumpeter, once explained, "We jumped on a record like Bobby Hackett's 'Embraceable You' because it was full of beautiful extended harmonies and unusual changes. Bobby was a guitarist, and knew his changes, just as Dizzy Gillespie and Kenny Clarke knew keyboard harmony." (There are few good examples of Hackett's guitar work, but one record, *Feather Bed Blues* by Leonard Feather's All Stars, shows him to have been an imaginative and dexterous performer on the instrument.)

Harris went on to describe the interest some of his friends took in musicians who played long lines, and although he does not mention Hackett again specifically, this was surely another reason why his music attracted the early modernists. But there was even more to it than that. When Miles Davis remarked that he liked the way Hackett "runs his chords, stays around the low register, and, above all, always says something", he could, of course, have been talking about himself. It would be going too far to claim that Hackett was a cool player before his time, especially as his own main inspiration in later life was Louis Armstrong, but there were several qualities, such as his avoidance of "hot" tonal tricks and mannerisms, for example, and his preoccupation with musical subtleties, that he shared with the young lions of the late 40s.

THE ONLY time I ever saw Hackett was at the Nice Festival of 1975. He looked old and tired and probably knew he was dying. Despite the fact that the temperature was in the 80s, and everybody else was in shirt-sleeves, he was wearing a neat, dark suit and bow-tie. Musically, he was also a misfit, as the organisers had thrown him into a noisy catch-all blowing session in which his quiet solos barely registered. After a while, he discreetly slipped off stage.

This stray glimpse, it seems, was a good image for his whole career; but if he was often drowned out and ignored when he was alive, years after his death he remains well worth listening to. Jazz is often loud and blaring and greasy, and none the worse for that, but it also has room for still, quiet voices, and of these Bobby Hackett was one of the purest. *

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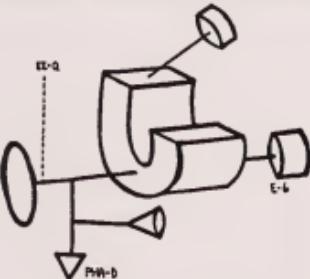
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ity from NYC.

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Proposition 1: They're loud and they're going nowhere fast. Hell, take it easy, boys, we'll pick 'em off at the impasse.

Negation 1: Eat dust, suckers. Speed is more than just accelerated pulse. It's about thinking on the move.

THE FIRST law of music is, you gotta move. Speed interprets the law according to its dialectic of stasis — energy consumed in treading air — and displacement of vast spaces in doublequick time. Thrash is the dialectic of speed transcribed

into music. Some thrash moves so fast it is constantly returning to the same spot before anyone notices it leave.

Even so, it is always a moving target, and, as such, constitutes lean pickings for its bountiful hunter critics. Of all speed's great dialecticians, Blind Idiot God, a New York-based guitar trio out of St Louis, are working themselves up to be the most elegant and elusive.

Their speed vector doesn't so much trace a neat pattern of acceleration as a series of heartstopping shifts in tempo. Volume, meanwhile, accounts for its density. When the highest point of the arc of volume intersects with the highest point on the speed curve, density and intensity combine in one BIG unstoppable juggernaut of sound. All this would be so much traffic noise if BIG didn't have such a firm grasp of the music's dynamic elements.

"The music's obviously thought about some," agrees BIG's Andy Hawkins, electric guitarist as the Great Helmsman of Speed, as he studies London's strategic points from Rough Trade's rooftop. Studious contrapuntal bassist Gabe Katz is at his side. Drummer Ted Epstein is otherwise engaged.

"This band is supposed to be maximising the potential of loud, three-piece sound," continues Andy, "without it being too overstudied. I mean, you have to think about it some, otherwise you're gonna get some kinda primal banging exercise. And Loed knows, there's plenty of that already being done into the ground. You have to focus it a little, direct it some. But the ideas are very general . . . Any time there's an opportunity to worry about it more or get more ornate, we pass, you know, we try to keep it as trim as we possibly can."

Preparation 2: Sing now or forever remain silent. How're we supposed to know what's going down without a ringmaster to direct our responses?

Negation 2: The voice sings only to deceive. Rock without a gag usually counterfeits circus emotions.

BLIND IDIOT GOD are one of a new breed of American guitar groups devoted to instrumental music. Their first label SST have been going all out to impress a range of "No Age" instrumental bands on the world. The most SST achieved was to negate *Negation 2* by leaving you yearning for a singer to distract your attention from the groups' lack of invention. BIG are the exception. They know that instrumental music is more than rock with an AWOL vocalise. The absence of a voice extends their dynamic possibilities.

"There's a certain way of communication that's interfered with by the voice, because it's got an immediate emotional nature to it," conjectures Andy. "Music, thank God, is really devoid of that obviousness. People have come up to us and said our music is so cold and emotionless, and I say, great, I'm glad to hear it. I'm sick and tired of happy or sad or angst. They're not at all conducive to making interesting things at this point in rock's development."

A Blind Idiot God instrumental is that which cannot be

reduced to anything else other than itself, a pure force, dense, intense, elemental.

"It's hard for me to say exactly what the end product is. I know what we put into it. We try to create huge sonic space, fill it up, map it out with what we play. A lot of it is about sound, because for me that's the visceral part. We give it direction and density. Maybe there's some melody, but it's nice to hear it a little bit buried, because I don't like to hear goddamn flute lines flowing all over the place . . ."

And what else? When it's not about speed, Blind Idiot God deal in the heavy space of dub — the ultimate of inert musics, the three same notes repeated over and over. On their second LP *Undertow*, produced by Bill Laswell, those notes reverberate and resonate just like good dub does. The BIG decision to break speed records with reggae relates as much to their love of the music as to a desire to crack Hardcore's BLOCKHEAD faction, expose them to the sonic possibilities of space.

Proposition 3: New York, hub! A cracked Egghead Republic where the loft elite slam it with the underworld way below 42nd Street. Enough yolk! Sink it now!

Negation 3: There are worse things than John Zorn's bird calls. Duck off if you're worried about getting egg on your face.

ANDY HAWKINS' mother was a ragtime pianist. He and Gabe, high school comrades, came from a "frontier suburb" next to St Louis's black districts. They absorbed the musics on their doorsteps, formed their own group, played three gigs proper supporting hardcore heroes Black Flag, Minutemen and Die Kreuzen, before moving to NY. Their first LP won them the admiration of Bill Laswell, who produced *Undertow* and released it in Europe on his Enemy label. The BIG noise dynamo also appealed to John Zorn's aesthetic of speed. Politic or genuine affinities?

Says Gabe: "There's a stigma to such names, I guess, but that's not the point. We have a lot of aesthetics in common with Bill, so that was easy. He's made us a good sounding record when we couldn't have done the same ourselves. I guess we work with Zorn because we had something to offer by way of sonic backdrop to the kind of pieces he does . . ."

Andy: "With Zorn, we're still trying to figure out exactly where we're going with the whole thing. We're doing three different kinds of things with him. We do total improv, with very sketchy hand signals directing tempo changes etc. We're also doing his Coltrane covers, with Tim Berne, too. Then there's the other category, very structured composition, like 'Purged Specimen.' (The excellent Zorn track on BIG's *Savannah EP*.) "There's some things he'd probably like us to compress more if we could, or go even faster. We're forcing him to play by our rules to a certain extent. There's some things he's gonna have to meet us half way on. On the other hand I've never heard him play badly with somebody. If it's all falling apart he's the last person to go . . ."

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SOUNDCHECK



Photo credit: Don Davis; Kirk Joseph, with the double-necked piano he built, courtesy Photo by CAROLINA BENSHEMESH.

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the real McCoy:

dirty dozen rende-

heaps of earthworks.

a cooked gun

& the *marsalis* station of dead jazz.

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THE DIRTY DOZEN BRASS BAND**VOODOO**

(CBS 45042)

Recorded, Meaure and New York, August–September 1987.

'It's All Over Now, Voodoo, Oop-Pop-A-Dab, Gemini Rising, Moose The Moche, Don't Drive Dreck, Black Drawers/Blae Parade, Santa Cruz'

Gregory Davis (t, v); Efrem Towns (tr, Charles Joseph (tb), Kevin Harris (ts, perc), Roger Lewis (ts, bs, perc), Kirk Joseph (sous), Jemel Marshall, Lionel Batiste (d, perc). With Dr John (p, v on "It's All Over Now"), Dizzy Gillespie (tr, v on "Oop-Pop-A-Dab"), Bradford Marsalis (ts on "Moose").

The Dirty Dozen aren't exactly the rejuvenation of a New Orleans tradition; they've invented their own. The instrumentation might suggest a pocket-sized edition of that city's marching bands, but anyone who's listened to George Lewis or Kid Thomas Valentine will find few points of comparison. The stately, sombre beauty of the older music is swept aside by this tumbling stylistic gumbo. If you want to find them, there are plenty of other echoes. Their basic gait recalls the ecstatic contrapuntalism of dance orchestras such as Sam Morgan's, and they secure the exuberance of Fats Domino's Louisiana party music, the dry wit of the Chicagoans, the hollering timbre of the Texas tenors – even some of the slick, neoclassic streak in New York jazz.

In other words, this is a contemporary jazz ensemble like Brass Fantasy or Eight Bold Souls – at least, in terms of feel and delivery. Their canny retreads of "It's All Over Now" and "Moose The Moche" are familiar exercises for modern players – like, let's shake the shit out of this old stuff. But if their licks have a trace of irony, their inner workings are far less ambitious. There's no attempt at finding new structures, and for all its sportive excitement the music lacks real depth. What you hear is what you get. "Voodoo", for instance, is just a sequence of disconnected solos over a busy vamp, and the perky movements of "Gemini Rising" and "Santa Cruz" have a vaudevillian tang. Even Kevin Harris' quickfire solos, tied inexorably to the beat, make you think of Jimmy Dorsey or even Rudy Wiedoeft.

None of this strips *Voodoo* from being a lot of fun. Scott Billington's production gives them a zippy impact, and the LP is well programmed to accommodate the band's star guests among their own shining moments. But I'm not sure that the DDBB aren't rather like the Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section – masters in accom-

paniment (as they were on recent records by Elvis Costello and The Neville Brothers) and not quite profound enough to stand convincingly on their own. One other thing – why have Columbia sat on this record for so long?

MIKE FISH

MCCOY TYNER**REVELATIONS**

(Blue Note 7-91651-1/2)

Recorded New York, 25–27 October 1988
Yesterday, You Taught My Heart To Sing, In A Mellow Tone; View From The Hill, Lazybird; Don't Blame Me, Riv; How Deep Is The Ocean, Someone To Watch Over Me, Come Together, Autumn Leaves, Persone, When I Fall In Love (last three tracks – CD only).

McCoy Tyner (p)

I ALWAYS have time for Tyner, and perhaps it's

MCCOY TYNER

as Clare Fischer's *Alone Together* (MPS), but the music-making is all McCoy.

His original melodies are expansive and clear-eyed, his improvisations on the several standards, some of which he is revisiting for the first time since his youth, are compelling without bullying a listener. It's consistent without being samely: compare the different treatments he summons for "How Deep Is The Ocean" and "Someone To Watch".

Tyner's originals have their own kind of muscular charm: "You Taught My Heart" and "Contemplation" benefit from a thoughtful reserve, as full of notes as they are, but the pianist never fritters the melodies away on lollipops phrasing. Even the closing "When I Fall In Love" is firmly stated.

With so many post-Tyner pianists – Mulgrew Miller, Benny Green, Michel Petrucciani and the many others – playing so much piano, it's good to find their first master in command of a record like this

RICHARD COOK

EARTHWORKS**DIG?**

(Editions EG, EGED 60, EEGCD 60)

Recorded London, November/December 1988.
Strenuous Kicks, Gentle Persuasion, Dances, Pajama's Way; Dancing On Frith Street, A Street's Throw, Librarians, Carobea
Bill Bruford (dr), Django Bates (p), Ian Bellamy (s), Tim Harries (bs).

NO DISRESPECT to Bill Bruford, but when Earthworks was first formed in 1986 to investigate what blood could still be squeezed from fusion, the drummer/leader's background (20 years hammering the traps in the rock business, with Yes and King Crimson among others) didn't encourage confidence about what kind of fusion it would be. Then it transpired that Bruford's first steps were to hire Django Bates and Ian Bellamy, which guaranteed that whatever Earthworks would be, it wasn't going to be that collection of droning keyboard sounds, fussy drumming and trance-inducing patterns from 70s art-rock that has characterised what's often treated as the more intelligent end of crossover.

Earthworks' second session, beginning with a limping circus fanfare that turns into a springy electronic background for boppish licks, and passing through the lazy calypso of

unfortunate that we've tended to take this great pianist for granted in recent years. One could see McCoy as a man well ahead of his time. His ensemble albums for Milestone in the early 70s anticipated plenty of world music trends, in jazz and out, and his later trio recordings went on to illuminate how modal jazz could survive in a post-fusion era. Not that he's ever shouted about it.

Still, Tyner's recording career has been a trifle muddled of late. All-star meetings and desultory live sets did less than the best justice to his talent. Now, finally, Michael Cuscuna's recorded him solo again, for the first time in 16 years. Performing in the solitude of New York's Merkin Hall, taken down in the lustre of a concert-hall ambience, Tyner plays with a grace and refinement that creates an exquisite set of miniatures. The sound recalls a date such

"Gentle Persuasion" to a melancholy version of Tony Hatch's "Downtown", is an ingenious splicing of Bates and Ballamy's virtuosic jazzy catholicy with Bruford's punchy percussion, preoccupied with clattery snare patterns and electronics.

The band is constantly manipulating time changes and shifts of mood, Iain Ballamy's solo on "Downtown" begins like Jan Garbarek and ends with a string of rock-sax licks that could have emerged from a night with the Geno Washington band, before returning to the pensive speculation imparted by the shifted harmonies with which the band turns a song-contest hit into an ECM track. "Dancing On Fifth Street" is a classic piece of Bates genre-mangling, opening with eccentrically strutting funk, grafting barbbling Coltraneish soprano playing over 50s rock time, and moving toward New Orleans for the backdrop to Bates' tenor horn solo.

On keyboards Bates shows how effectively he can be dark, brooding and abrasive (a tidal, guitar-like solo on the African-influenced "Libreville") and deftly and casually jazzy (the Herbie Hancock piano solo on "Pilgrams Way"). "Corroboree", an impressionistic piece with a long free opening devoted to aboriginal history, even finds Ballamy on the didgeridoo, though its switch between heat-haze wails and clatters and robotic mid-tempo head is less charismatically integrated than most of what's happening on this inventive session.

JOHN FORDHAM

ANTHONY BRAXTON ENSEMBLE (VICTORIAVILLE) 1988 (Victo 07)

Recorded: Canada, 8 October 1988
Copperton 141 (+ 20 + 96 + 120D), *Copperton 142*
Braxton (bs, ss, ss, as), Evan Parker (ts), Paul
Smoker (tb), George Lewis (tb), Bobby Naughton
(vib), Joelle Leandre (tb), Gerry Hemingway (perc)

WHEN IT came down to sizing up the essentials within Braxton's bulging discography, my preference had previously gone the way of his free improvisations. It was there that the crystal clarity presented itself: no copious sleeve notes to get bogged down in, no graphical formulations to interpret, just the music to appreciate for what it was and no more (Braxton, after all, takes some beating as a musician who thinks on his feet, structuring

from the moment). But it's a prejudice that is gradually being eked away – and this album has done more to that end than most.

Braxton has crossed paths with most of the assembled cast before (though only Hemingway numbers amongst his regulars), and he uses old as well as new compositional outlines to direct the spontaneous possibilities (*Copperton 141* is actually collaged with old scores, either presented whole or in part). There's admittedly more of a reliance on lengthily notated heads, the music developing as an episodic continuum of featured solos or textual combinations, the whole following an almost classical line of logic.

Smoker's bristling trumpet and Naughton's crystalline patter on vibes move periodically astride the orchestral sound (Parker, strangely, maintains a less prominent position), whilst



the inter-group combinations bustle with fast-flowing, agitated progressions bubbling forth to the next scored hook. Less tortuous, more refined, Braxton has eloquently blurred the notated/improvised divide. A consistently engrossing work which finds this momentary gathering playing with the adeptness of a band who could have been working together for years. The as-yet-unconvinced should definitely start here.

DAVID BJC.

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD SAXOPHONE QUARTET WHAT'S GONE (Coppens CCD 3002)

Recorded: The Hague, 6 December 1987, Utrecht, 21 May 1988
Inspires, The Symbiotes, Exorcists, Lester Falls Down,

Baptismal Rite, Song For What's Gone, Hamurak, High Tide, Eggshell, Getaway, Funky Stuff
Allan Chase (as, ss), Ben Schachter (ts, ss, except 7, 8, 10, 11), Buh Zung (ts), Tom Hall (ts), Steve Adams (bs, ss)

29TH STREET SAXOPHONE QUARTET LIVE

(Red RR 123223 1)

Recorded: Capitole, July 1988.

The Originator, Passavant, "B" On The Brook, Clouds's Car, Night Dresser, New Moon, The Halyar, My Little Suede Shoes
Ed Jackson (as), Bobby Watson (ts), Rich Rothenberg (ts), Jim Hartog (bs).

THE 29TH Street team were one of the rare joys of this year's Camden week, four horns with an output like a whole orchestra, interacting so expertly that it was pretty pointless to tease out the different voices. That's certainly true on record and true, too, of the Neighborhood boys, who might sound a mite more user-friendly but for the fact that they sound, if anything, a lot strectier.

The 29th Street's roots are basically in bebop and Bobby Watson is unquestionably the most agile revisionist working in that mode today, his arrangement of and contributions to the Parker song are extraordinary, compacting the rhythms and the chords into dense clusters. YNSQ have been eating harmonic takeaways, sauced with a little funk. The Blood Ulmer track, "High Time", is curiously colourless, though, and the real shanflapper is Kool & The Gang's "Funky Stuff", strutted with an aplomb belied by the artsy-moody liner photo.

Steve Adams is currently working with ROVA, another unit cursed with compulsive eclecticism. There is a hint of high-brave intention on *What's Gone* – the title piece and "The Seychelles" are moody tone poems – but there's a sense of humour, too, as on "Lester Falls Down", a track which, paired with "Ematloc", underlines their respect for jazz tradition. (However, a moratorium, please, on spelling names backwards, school mug stuff.)

TNSSQ put on a good show, but much of its impact is visual, as the lads march around like a second line, dipping and raising their saxes like Fletcher Henderson veterans. The live recording is curiously lacklustre, never quite living up to the promise – except perhaps for "My Little Suede Shoes" – of the opening "The Originator". There are compelling arrangements, by Jim Hartog, of Shorter's "Night

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Dreamer" and Monk's "Pannonica", but the originals, again mostly by Hartog, don't insist too strongly. They've played better sets and it seems a pity that it should be this one that should have been selected for cutting. As for *Coming*, on this boot I have the YNSQ ahead by a point.

BRIAN MORTON

FREEBOP**LIVE TRACKS****(Imperius IMP 18610)**

Recorded: Bracknell, 5 July 1986

Narrator: Floot Indigo, Not.

Bobby Bradford (c), Ted Entwistle (t), Ron Herman (b), Pete King (as); Dave Merchant (g); Nigel Moyse (g); Eddie Parker (flare); Evan Parker (ts); Courtney Pine (ss, ts), Nick Stephens (b); Annie Whitehead (tb), John Stevens (d).

DETAIL PLUS**WAY IT GOES/DANCE OF THE SOUL
(Imperius IMP 18611)**

Recorded: Cambridge, 2 July 1986.

*Way It Goes/Dance Of The Soul Part 1, Way It
Goes/Dance Of The Soul Part 2.*

Bobby Bradford (c), Johnny Dyani (b), Frøde Gjersdal (ts); John Stevens (d).

DETAIL DED with Dyani, but Freebop is still (in various forms) "live" and kicking. Two different aspects of the work of John Stevens: wildly swinging solos framed by written themes and the more intimate atmosphere of an improvising ensemble. The spirit of Bobby Bradford forms a link between these two groups; his fluid lines fit both contexts with ease. The cornettist's duet with Pete King which forms the introduction to "Harmo'nicia" is possibly the high point of *Live Tracks*; the two horns slapping ballonically around each other.

What follows is some fairly typical Bracknell Jazz Festival partying with especially rousing solos from King, Bradford and Annie Whitehead. Courtney Pine has come a long way since 1986; his solo on "Floot Indigo" is rather raw, to say the least. Listening to him alternately honking and squeaking in auto-duet, I sometimes wonder whether I wouldn't like some of these rough edges to reappear.

Way It Goes is a more satisfying record; intense, varied and finely-focused. The dark soul dancing at the heart of Detail is the late Johnny Dyani. His musical personality is completely original and highly unpredictable. On

Way It Goes he sometimes snaps at the heels of the ride cymbal without ever being completely seduced by its rhythms. Other times he's swapping between melodic and rhythmic playing with bewildering frequency. Always ready to joust with silence, his solo spots are fascinating; the strings sounding like distant drums or a piano or Whatever he's doing it raises the whole group to a different place. Although essentially an improvising group, there are loose structures, evocative fragments of melody on the horns, duet intros and endings. This probably reflects the presence of Bobby Bradford who brings clarity of purpose wherever he goes. His playing is more melodic and more beautiful than at any other time in his career. Gjersdal is always inspired by the cornettist and manages to get going rather than become satisfied to the point of non-existence as he is

Recorded: New York, 1988
House Of Edward, Standard, Makin' Whoopee, Three Little Words, U.M.G., Praise.
Brford Marsalis (as, rs); Delbert Felix, Milt Hinton (b); Jeff Watts (d).

WYNTON MARSALIS**THE MAJESTY OF THE BLUES**

(CBS 465129)

Recorded: New York, 1988.

The Majesty Of The Blues (Paduwan Strat), Hickory Dick, The Devil's Of Jazz, Prescotter Antsy,
Gö Bar On Töö Third Day

Wynton Marsalis (c), Teddy Riley (s); Freddie Lomax (b); Todd Williams (ss, ns), Dr Michael White (cl); Wes Anderson (sa), Marcus Roberts (g), Reginald Veal (b); Danny Barker (bj); Herlin Riley (d); Rev Jeremiah Wright Jr (narration).

THE MARSALIS Brothers have gone on their annual family outing. This year Marcus, who's the pianist in Wynton's band, is also along, but brother Delfeayo, who's a producer, is there to make sure he behaves himself. Once again they're gone to the Jazz Heritage Museum, but this year there's a special display to mark the 90th anniversary of Duke Ellington's birth. Marcus looks grave and Branford nods wisely, while Wynton takes a closer look and decides he ought to start growling a bit.

On Roberts' album the opener "Arrival" finds Wynton at his most Milesian, Harmoniumed and fluent. Roberts makes obeisance to early McCoy Tyner, and with Elvin's brushwork clattering furiously it's quite an event. Unfortunately none of the other band tracks comes close to this. Roberts has two solo flights, on "Blue Monk" and "Petal". The Monk piece is given what might be called the standard-defence strafe-effect treatment, and it's bad if you put out of mind the more outrageous (and instructive) interpretations that you might have heard. "Petal" is a party piece that Ellington used to play at times, and it gets an authorised-version facsimile rendering here. I hesitate to think that the man and the material are at one, but it does seem like it in this pretty, empty, drawing-room performance.

Branford's is the most consistent and fully-realised set, maybe because it pretends to be little beyond an album of mainstream saxophone with bass and drums backing. Whether the 12-bar "House Of Edward" is meant to relate to Ellington isn't clear to me (it might be another member of the family), but "U.M.G." is not one of those Ellington



sometimes prone to do. John Stevens is the masterly non-leader, directing dramatic changes from within. An absorbing musical adventure.

ROLAND RAMANAN

MARCUS ROBERTS**THE TRUTH IS SPOKEN HERE
(Novus 3051-1-N)**

Recorded: New York, 26 & 27 July 1988

The Arrival, Blue Monk, Maestro, Single Petal Of A Rose, Country By Choice, The Truth Is Spoken Here, In A Mellie Tone, Native Son, Big, The Blues.

Wynton Marsalis (c), Charlie Rouse, Todd Williams (rs), Marcus Roberts (g), Reginald Veal (b), Elvin Jones (d). (Collective personnel.)

BRANFORD MARSALIS**TRIO JEEPY**

(CBS 465134)

runes that fall regularly out of the repertoire into common usage, so it has to be a specific choice. It's not the strongest track, however, that distinction goes to "Stardust". The tune is a weary old warhorse by now, and at first I thought it was being led too slowly around the track, but some flexible and imaginative drumming and an almost Ben Websterish quality in Branford's playing made it a genuinely dignified outing. The lively "Three Little Words" is nearly as good, with Branford sounding this time rather like Pete Brown. "Peace" is notable for the way in which it carefully hugs the original, as if one false move might result in something rather problematic happening.

Wynton's is the most original set. "Majesty" finds him using a plunger-mute to re-create a "growl" style while his effortless technique allows him to turn a few cartwheels at the same time. But the piano only tinkles and the saxes have no idea at all. "Hickory" is familiar, modal, and, like "Majesty", goes on too long.

The main interest resides in the "Death Of Jazz"/"Premature Autopsy"/"Third Day" sequence. His New Orleans background and its funeral traditions seem to have provided the inspiration. "Death" forms the dirge, but it has a nice theme and ensemble richness – the banjo is very unexpected – although again it's extended beyond its value. "Premature" is a sermon, around a text by Stanley Cruch suggesting that the soulless would have us believe that jazz is dead and gone. Its development involves the notion of ongoing artistic struggle and memorabilia Ellington as a bulwark against philistinism. It's all a bit confused, nor to say odd in view of what seems to be Wynton's own fame and fortune, better fitted indeed to Mingus's more rancid moments. Makes you wonder why and how the trumpeter got caught up in all this. However, "Third Day" makes amends by approximating the traditional sprightly release, with a lovely and highly original drum solo, a bit more banjo-strumming, and a contribution from Wynton that seems as close to early Harry James as to anything else.

From one point of view, there's much to be said for having respect for the past, and the Marsalis brothers may well claim to be properly Green for their assiduous recycling of previously-used materials and styles. Against this it may be argued that rich and creamy tones laid on instrumental expertise are too

often used as a defence against the intrusion into their world of anything too intellectually demanding. The most modern outside event takes on board here is Branford's version of Ornette's "Peace" – and that, we may remember, was first recorded 30 years ago.

JACK COOK

EVAN PARKER/KEITH ROWE/BARRY GUY/EDDIE PREVOST

SUPERSESSION

(Marchless MR 17)

Recorded: London, 3 September 1984.

Saxophone

Evan Parker (ss, ts), Keith Rowe (g, electronics), Barry Guy (b, electronics); Eddie Prevost (d)

EDDIE PREVOST IS NOT only a highly articulate percussionist but also a stimulating writer,

is not unwelcoming to audiences prepared to give something of themselves, to melt into passages of hushed, eerie beauty, to be sucked into vortices of churning turbulence or to participate, albeit vicariously through their responses and imagination, in the creation of unremembered sounds.

The rapport between the musicians and the unconventional noises they produce from their instruments challenge the listeners' powers of identifying and distinguishing the voices of the individual players. Enjoyable though this game is it is hardly the most fruitful approach. Details of timbres, component sound relationships, transmogrifications of constituent parts of the music and, flipping the telescope over, the overall effect of the tapestry matter more than individual credits.

A supersession for sure, music-making of formidable integrity (in all senses of the word) which offers seemingly infinite and inexhaustible prospects.

BARRY WITHERDEN

HANS WERNER HENZE

STRING QUARTETS 1-5

(Wergo WER 60114/15)

Recorded: Stuttgart, 4, 5 and 8 November 1984.

String quartet, 1-5.

Arditti String Quartet: Irvine Arditti (vn), Alexander Balanescu (vn); Levine Andrade (vla), Rohan de Saram (clo).



witness for example his occasional contributions to The White Place or has examination of public and critical reactions to The Ganelin Trio in *Werk 7*. This CD release from Prevost's own label comes with a thought-provoking essay on alienation strategies in music. He contrasts these methods with the approach of the participants in this concert recording, who "do not seek to 'demonstrate' an alternative form. They are content to perform in a mode which has become the simple and natural means of musical expression."

I suppose this is "difficult" music, but these exponents inhabit the unfamiliar places of this sound world as if they were the most natural of habitats, which for them they are. This is a hermetic environment in which the four elements interweave, merge, discourse, shape-shift and shift. It may be self-contained but it

THERE IS MUCH more to the 20th-century string quartet repertoire than Bartók, Shostakovich and The Second Viennese School, as the Arditti String Quartet regularly illustrates, and this does not have to include the recent neo-tonalist quartets or the neo-modernist lunatic fringe. This album is evidence of that, and, in addition, surveys a neglected area of a leading contemporary composer.

One of the most fascinating aspects of these quartets is their highly varied approach to form. The first two are student compositions written respectively before and after an encounter with René Leibowitz and the Darmstadt mélée. The former has the traditional four-movement layout and exhibits the spiky neo-classical style of the 1920s and 30s à la Stravinsky and Hindemith. In the latter, Henze adopts rigorous 12-tone technique, the three movements being as light, fleeting, brief and devoid of rhetoric as this style encourages,

with typically Schoenbergian allusions to traditional and popular forms. Both styles proved to be blind alleys as regards his future development.

The last three quartets are all mature works composed between 1975 and 1977. The third is a seamless 19-minute funeral ode, wherein deep expressivity belies an involved contrapuntal discourse. In contrast, the most recent consists of a series of five introspections on the human condition and its unavoidable effect on creativity, concluded by a reflection on the chance of a fresh start offered by each new day.

At 35 minutes, the fourth quartet is the most substantial. Although returning to the traditional four-movement plan, it is unusual in that each movement features a different instrument as soloist with the others accompanying. The music of this particularly striking composition ranges from wild tragic-comic expressiveness to languorous beauty. Also noteworthy is the use, in the final rondo, of the episodic aleatory compositional methods of which Lutoslawski is fond.

This difficult, unyielding music, revealing its secrets slowly and requiring a high degree of concentration and involvement from its audience. Nevertheless, its engrossing variety and invention make the effort worthwhile. In addition, the perfection and commitment of the performances is most persuasive.

STEPHEN ROMMERS

TOM HARRELL

STORIES

(Contemporary C-14043)

Recorded New York, 26–27 January 1988

Rapture, Song Flower, The Miniature, The Water's Edge, Story, Visible Blame

Tom Harrell (flute); Bob Berg (ts), John Scofield (g), Niels Lan Doky (p), Ray Drummond (b), Billy Hart (d)

MIKE LE DONNE QUINTET

BOUT TIME

(Criss Cross Jazz 1033)

Recorded New Jersey, 11 January 1988

Bo's Blues, Major Contentor, All Too Soon, Why Wait I Born, Kelly's Gear, B.P. Bonus, Boat Train
Tom Harrell (t, flutes); Gary Smulyan (bs), Mike Le Donne (p), Dennis Erwin (b), Kenny Washington (d)

GREG MARVIN QUINTET

WORKOUT!

(Criss Cross Jazz 1037)

Recorded: New York, 5 January 1988
Zip, Everything I Have I Want, Dicker's Drawn, Sado-masochist-Lex, Lover Man, Gentle Guest,
Tom Harrell (ts), Greg Marren (ts), Kenny Barron (p), George Mass (b), Kenny Washington (d).

EERO KOIVISTOINEN

PICTURE IN THREE COLOURS

(Core COCD 9.00515 0)

Recorded: New York, October 1981
Lowering, Patterns, Long Way From Home, Sunday, Pictures In Three Colours, Kindergarten, Second Thought, Antic Blues

Tom Harrell (t), Eero Korivisto (ts), John Scofield (g), Jim McNeely (p), Ron McClure (b), Jack DeJohnette (d)

The DRAMATIC, rather eerie photograph of Tom Harrell on the sleeve of *Stories* may have been intended to evoke the trumpeter's troubled mental state (he suffers from schizophrenia).



nia), but it belies the music inside. Whatever the vagaries of his mind, or perhaps as a consequence, Harrell's music is always perfectly focused, and equally so on both trumpet and flugelhorn, the instrument he uses exclusively on this set.

As the title suggests, Harrell adheres to the school of thought which understands the art of the solo in terms of telling a story, with a logically constructed beginning, middle and end. There is no stuck with post-modernist tricks or fractured narrative lines here, just beautifully precise playing along well-established thematic and stylistic lines. The music has an occasional flavour of Horace Silver's blues-laced funk-pop feel – Harrell and saxophonist Bob Berg first met in Silver's 1970s band – and something of the energetic orthodoxy of Harrell's regular gaffet, Phil

Woods; but it is clearly and definably Harrell's project.

Everyone else fits in neatly behind the leader, demonstrating their credentials as straight-ahead players. Berg is not the most distinctive tenor voice amid the thousands currently demanding our attention, but has a certain tensile strength to his playing which is appropriate here, while Lan Doky is both sensitive and responsive on piano. Scofield, who seems about as omnivorous as Harrell these days, plays on the final three cuts.

It is a fine set, finely played. Whether that is enough to sell records amid the seemingly endless cascade of jazz flowing hell for leather into the racks is another matter; not many people have bottomless pockets. None the less, the trumpeter's good track record and his strong band may give him an edge over these three other sessions in which he features.

All occupy the same kind of mainstream-bop musical space as his own record, but heard in sequence there is a slightly depressing familiarity about the whole business. Each of the Criss Cross sleeve notes makes a case for the leader as especially deserving of a record amid a plethora of talent in New York City, and sure enough, both records are strong, beautifully executed, and slightly predictable.

Mike LeDonne is a graceful and imaginative pianist, Greg Marren a resourceful tenor player with an enjoyably light touch. Each has assembled a reliable band for the session, with Harrell and drummer Kenny Washington the common factors, and each produces a pleasing set of tunes, with just enough personal hallmarks to ward off any real suspicion of conveyor-belt jazz. Gary Smulyan's emphatic baton – check out the driving "Minor Contention" on *Bout Time* – makes a nice change from tenor, while Marren has the slightly more impeccable rhythm section.

I don't want to sound too negative here – Criss Cross are undoubtedly doing a good thing in documenting these emerging talents. Both records deserve to be heard, and no one who ventures is likely to be disappointed, but I couldn't honestly say that either was an essential purchase.

The Eero Korivisto session falls into much the same category. Recorded in 1981, it captures the Finnish saxophonist in a bright post-bop session with a highly talented supporting cast, including Harrell and Scofield. There is little of the North European sound of

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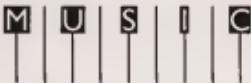
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Garbarek and his cohorts in the Finn's more American-flavoured playing, and in the context of these four records, artificially linked by Harrell's presence, that is perhaps a shame – it might have been just what was needed. Too many records, too little time ...

KENNY MATHIESON

**SATO MICHIBIRO
RODAN
(hat ART CD6015)**

Recorded NYC, 11–16 April 1988.
Sato Michibiro (esuguru shamisen – all tracks); Bill Frisell (g); Fred Frith (g), Tenko (v); Mark Miller (b); Nicolas Collins (electronics); Christian Marclay (turntables); Steve Coleman (as); Tosh Ban Djan – Ikuo Mori (d, d machine) and Luis Shiot (b, voice); Semantics – Elliott Sharp (g, bg); Sam Bennett (d); Ned Rothenberg (as); Tom Coia (cl); Joey Baron (d); Mark Dresser (b); Gerry Hemingway (d). (Collective personnel.) Directed and produced by John Zorn.

In WESTERN settings the esuguru shamisen sounds like a guitar played below the bridge, its timbral and tonal ranges limited by the tautness of the strings. Stuck on the other side of the bridge the player is condemned to wave hello or goodbye to his fellow musicians, his alternately beckoning and pleading notes emerging at the near and the far side of the mixes. But Japanese art is traditionally about transcending severe restrictions of line and colour. For the sake of easy cross-cultural exchange, let's accept this cliché as a port of entry and marvel at how Sato Michibiro, nominally the fulcrum of this latest John Zorn direction involving his usual shoal of poolhall sharks awaiting the call, controls and conducts the flow of energies.

Sato's shamisen is the one constant through the various duo, trio and quartet settings. He uses it to raise and lower the ladders of raucously plucked notes, around or up and down which the other instrumentalists scatter their noises. The whole is characterised by a sort of serious playfulness, Sato sometimes playing the clown and elsewhere the stern teacher keeping the other's waywardnesses in check. When faced with turntable manipulator Marclay's cracked kora musings Sato arches his notes in a quizzical brow.

His three-way interplays with guitarists Frith and Frisell – especially the unusually lengthy one that closes the collection – are

uncommonly touching, even as they bare raw nerves. Though hardly a grandfather himself, Sato's skilled and pious refusal to be bound by his instrument's modest traditions justifies his headlining status.

BIBA KOPP

**TERJE RYPDAL
THE SINGLES COLLECTION
(ECM 1383)**

Recorded: Oslo, August 1988.
There Is A Hot Lady In My Bedroom And I Need A Drivé, Spirit, Mystery Man, The Last Hero, Strange Behaviour, U.N.I., Cryin', Sonnbuk, Somewhere, Study, Cruiser Song
Rypdal (g); Allan Dangerfield (ky), Bjørn Kjellemyr (b); Audun Kleive (d).

WHAT' AN ECM "Singles Collection"? With



limer notes? Unprecedented stuff – but unfortunately this is no K-Tel lookalike, no compilation of memorable Norwegian number ones, for Terje's tongue is most firmly in his cheek and this, at last, is his fully-fledged swipe at "jazz".

It's a collection which continues the logical progression of his two previous releases, an album which actually has little to do with the "j" word (especially rhythmically) but everything to do with the craggier, funkier directions the guitarist has been taking since he formed the Chasers in 1984.

It's a weird record with lots going on – Hank Marvin, Clapton, Hendrix, Albert Collins, Weather Report, Jimmy Smith are all in there somewhere, scrambled together remarkably tightly and powerfully. Sometimes the music is tense and exhausting as on "Spirit"

(Norwegian for "crazy") which is like relentless road music driven by Rypdal's speedy, piercing phrases and Dangerfield's charging Hammond organ touches, while "U.N.I.", the album's highspot, has the guitarist squeezing our anguished cries over a pounding, resolute drum beat as dry-sounding as anything James Brown's bands produced.

Yet on the quieter "Mystery Man", Rypdal is all twangy, bent-string riffs and tremolo phrases – his 50s echoes bouncing against the modern, watery sounds of Dangerfield's synthesiser. It's when Rypdal looks towards funk and disco that he begins to fall unconvincedly into the swirl of drum machines and keyboard punctuations. His stated intention may well be to "go for that Prince sound" (*down beat* interview) but the Eurobeat feel of tracks like "Strange Behaviour" and "The Last Hero" sound closer to Ibiza than Paisley Park. Rypdal needs to find greater rhythmic and structural invention to come anywhere near the crunching power and originality of Prince.

It's as if Rypdal is paying his respects for the past 30 years of guitar music but despite the references to Prince and his screaming, thrashing guitar sounds, little of it seems to be of this decade. Unlike Bill Frisell's immaculate combinations of roots and revision, tradition and extension, comedy and respect, Rypdal seems to get stuck around 1975. It's music a very long way from the delicate sound-frescos he created ten years ago but, to these ears, Rypdal seems to have gone further back than forward – more nostalgia than progress.

PHILIP WATSON

**CHET BAKER
MEMORIES**

(King Records K2RP 6491)

Recorded: Tokyo, 14 June 1987.
Stella By Starlight, For Miles Only, Almost Blue, Person Is Black And White, My Funny Valentine
Chet Baker (t, v); Harold Danko (p); Hein Van Der Geyn (b); John Engels (d).

MY FAVOURITE SONGS

(Enja 5097–2)

Recorded: Hannover, 28 April 1988.
All Blue, My Funny Valentine, Will You Nodde?, Somewhere, In Your Own Sweet Way, Django, I Fall In Love Too Easily
Chet Baker (t, v); with the NDR Bigband and the Radio Orchestra Hannover, dir Dieter Glawischng

THE TROUBLE with death is the amount of

attention it draws to the final deeds of the deceased, should he or she happen to have been a public personality.

Here we have two of the latest releases garnered from Chet Baker's final year of live performances, one in Tokyo with a lackluster quartet and the other a lushly-arranged collection of crowd-pleasers, backed by Germany's finest radio big band. And it has to be said that, were it not for Baker's starring role, these recordings would have gone entirely unremarked. However, given that the man is no longer with us, and given also that at his best his sparse, clear tone seems to move the air it pierces, they can be seen as an appropriate full stop — crowd-pleasers and all — to a patchy career. The fact that he went out blowing beautifully is some consolation to his fans.

It's the German recording, made just two weeks before he died, on which he really shines. The crowd lovingly assembled in Hanover's Finkhars are not taken anywhere they haven't already been — that is a trip down memory lane complete with "My Funny Valentine" and "Summertime". But Chet plays sweet and true, and it's only when he sings, on "My Funny Valentine", that the performance falters and the years of hard living show up. He sings like a 90-year-old, which, I think, is taking self-indulgence too far.

His playing is solid enough on the earlier recording, but the band is less than swinging. I'm sure most musicians would agree that there are some gigs that just ain't worth recording. The sad thing is there'll probably be a whole batch of these released before the film that's been made of his life story hits the West End.

VERONICA LYONS

DAVE SMITH FIRST PIANO CONCERT — SONATAS

1-12
(Matchless MR14)

Recorded: London, April 1988.
Charlatan, Maxixe, Rumble, Dub, Mambo; Nostalgia;
Bossa Nova, Boomerang, Quat Tambora, Tango;
Thelonious, Allegro Barbers
John Tilbury (p).

DAVE SMITH is one of the "experimental composers" whose work was given crucial impetus by association with the Scratch Orchestra and the circle centred on the late Cornelius Cardew (Michael Parsons, John White, Howard

Skempton, Chris Hobbs and many others). What was "experimental music" (defined in the book of that name by Michael Nyman) in the early 70s has tended to be assimilated these days into the "postmodern", particularly, in the case of music like that of Smith, with its wilful abnegation of stylistic or historical allegiance.

His *First Piano Concert* consists of 24 pieces, one in each key, mostly three to four minutes long and each dedicated to a friend, colleague or admired figure. Twelve of them are recorded here by John Tilbury, a long-standing collaborator in various groupings with Smith and a member of the current incarnation of AMM. As might be gathered from the titles, each "sonata" is not only in a different key but in a different style, sometimes several at once ("Ramble" is a Busoniesque arrangement of

about it a deadpan wit bordering on the cadaverous (performing instruction for one piece: "Play like Thelonious Monk"). That won't be enough to convince the less patient, I fear, since the music is disdainful to a fault of sensationality in any form. Ambiguity, though: that's a different matter.

RICHARD BARRETT

GUUS JANSEN AND HIS ORCHESTRA DANCING SERIES (Geestgronden 1)

Recorded: Amsterdam, 14 August 1988.
Hop Hop; Slow Fox, Pogo 1; Pogo 2; Jaya Jive; Incantation;
Pamplid; Mambo.

Hein Robertson (tr), Wolter Wierbos (tb), Vincent Chancey (tpt), Ab Baars (ts, rs, cl), Paul Terrois (sts); Guus Jansen (p), Jacques Palmick (g), Maurice Horsthuys (vln); Ernst Reijseger (cls), Raoul van der Weide (b), Wim Janssen (perc).

GUUS JANSEN may not be an entirely familiar name to many *Wire* readers, but he is highly regarded in his native Holland, both for his work in free jazz and improvisation, and for a growing body of composition in more formally "classical" modes, ranging from piano music to symphonic pieces. Jansen has led a septet for several years now, and this Orchestra offers an expansion of that band, recorded in concert in Amsterdam.

The music is, as we have come to expect from the Dutch school, a diverse combination of the familiar and the unexpected, the innovative and the parodic. There are no sleeve notes of any description to indicate the relationship of composition to improvisation, but I would guess that these pieces — and I would not recommend actually trying to dance to them, with the possible exception of "Mambo" and "Joya Jive" — are largely and possibly quite tightly composed; all are credited to Jansen.

The registers vary considerably; the lengthy "Slow Fox", for example, moves from harsh atonality and extreme dissonance to a limpid, almost Debussyan textural luxuriance. Elsewhere, they seem to draw more directly on the free jazz lexicon, as on sections of the "Pogo" pieces, and in many of the contributions from the featured lead instrumentalists. Given the sensibility of the composer and the level of performance, it becomes largely irrelevant to the listener to know what is written and what improvised.

The jaunty, knockabout theme of "Joya Jive", and the Latinate "Mambo" (with Ab



Gershwin with one passage glancing at 20s Hindemith and a title from Percy Grainger), the only obvious absence being of atonality and anything bordering on what Smith would presumably regard as irrelevant and narcissistic avant-garde: this is music whose starting-point is the deliberate (and cheerful?) abandonment of "originality". It's all delivered with a great deal of skill, and played by Tilbury with equal stylistic versatility.

So who and where is Dave Smith in the midst of this frenzy of eclecticism? First, in the choice of musical materials, evincing admiration (for is it?) not only for Monk and gamelan, but, more eccentrically, for reggae and Soraibji and the idiotically banal gestures which make up "Boomerangs". Second, and this is what sticks in the mind and dispels suspicions of mere clever pastiche, the whole thing has

Bears in excellent form) are the nearest we get to a straightforward tune, while "Hip Hop" is a splendidly jagged piece, opening on slashing cello and saxophone exclamations before broadening out into a clamorous instrumental uproar. Like many such large groups playing this music, Janssen tends to use them largely in sub-divided units, and, in the European improvised manner, allows untrammeled aggression to collide profitably with humour.

KENNY MATHIESON

HANK MOBLEY

WORKOUT

(Blue Note, CDP7840802)

Recorded: New Jersey, 26 March 1961.

Workout; Uh Huh; Smoov'; The Best Things In Life Are Free; Gressin' Easy; Three Coins In A Fountain

Hank Mobley (ts); Grant Green (g); Wynton Kelly (p); Paul Chambers (b); Philly Joe Jones (d).

HANK MOBLEY

ANOTHER WORKOUT

(Blue Note, CDP7844312)

Recorded: New Jersey, 5 December 1961.

Get Off My Bag; I Should Care; Gettin' And Jeettin'; Hank's Other Sack; Hell's Young Lovers

Recorded: New Jersey, 26 March 1961.

Three Coins In A Fountain

Hank Mobley (ts); Wynton Kelly (p); Paul Chambers (b); Philly Joe Jones (d).

LEE MORGAN

CORNBREAD

(Blue Notes, CDP7842222)

Recorded: 1966.

Cornbread; Our Man Higgins; Corcoran, Ill Wind, Most Like Lat.

Lee Morgan (t); Jackie McLean (ts); Hank Mobley (ts); Herbie Hancock (p); Larry Rudley (b); Billy Higgins (d).

THREE RELEASES from the 60s featuring Hank Mobley – twice as leader, once as sideman. Frequently referred to as his "artistic peak" (when in fact 70s Mobley also repays investigation) the early 60s saw Mobley in superb company, resulting in four great albums: *Soul Station*, *Roll Call*, *Workout* and *Another Workout*. Throughout, Wynton Kelly played piano and Paul Chambers, bass. Art Blakey drummed on the first two, Philly Joe Jones on the rest. *Another Workout* was shelved until 1985 (a year before Mobley's death), because the session did not provide enough for an LP. An unissued number from the *Workout* session, "Three Coins In A Fountain", was used to fill

it out. (Curiously, CD buyers will also find this track on *Workout*, the CD format supplying enough room for the complete session).

Whatever the complications of release, this is mighty music: assured and spell-binding. It has a special resolution of grace and power that transcends the conventional distinction between finesse and emotional weight. Philly Joe Jones burns and crackles like a firework; Paul Chambers' notes are unerring.

Fans of the guitar in blues and rock and harmonica frequently baulk at the colourless "good taste" of jazz guitar, but exposure to Grant Green can be a revelation. He keeps his figures simple, and one of the joys of his solos is to hear the rhythm section gyrate about him. His soft touch really tells: you hang on every note because his fingers pluck a different tone each time. "Gressin' Easy" on *Workout* is a

on piano may explain the loss of grit. His clapped runs on "Our Man Higgins" threaten to turn into one of Dave Brubeck's Bach-like fugues; his chamber decorations on "Ill Wind" dissipate interest. Lee Morgan saves the day, though, his full burnished trumpet sound zigzagging through the chords like a champion skier, drenching the tunes with feeling. Billy Higgins is simultaneously pretty and explosive; Larry Ridley's bass is rock-solid throughout – notes whenever they are needed. Jackie McLean is suitably scatting with his notorious acidic alto.

Mobley is gripped by his own developments on "Cornbread": his absorption of both Coltrane and McLean makes for a tremendous wariness, giving his solos an edge of risk. "Most Like Lee" wraps things up with the relaxed bravado unique to Blue Note hard bop – not quite *Sidewinder*, but still a classic.

BEN WATSON



good description of Wynton Kelly's piano: it is quite unbelievable how his frequent playing of adjacent piano-keys to approximate blues notes, the sheer sidling insinuation of his right hand, can build up something so solid and impressive.

Hank Mobley is an under-sung tenor giant: his clarity and assurance are breath-taking. On the ballads his tenor has a vocal quality which emphasizes the wonderful abstraction of his solos. On the sweater themes ("Hello Young Lovers", "Three Coins") he adopts some of the fidgety mannerisms of Sonny Rollins, but in general his line is simultaneously forthright and intimate.

Cornbread is not as good as *Sidewinder*, the previous year's hit: the title track lacks "Sidewinder's" tight-screwed intensity. Herbie Hancock is no Sonny Clark, and his presence

AHMED ABDULLAH AND THE SOLOMONIC QUINTET

AHMED ABDULLAH AND THE SOLOMONIC QUINTET

(Silkheart SHLP-109)

African Songbird; Gypsy Lady; The Search; Castle II; Khadzane; The Dame We Do; Webkiss Sam

Ahmed Abdullah (t, fln, v); David S Ware (ts, strich); Masuhiyah (g); Fred Hopkins (b); Charles Moffett (d).

ABDULLAH'S PROBABLY best known as an associate of Arthur Blythe's early bands but he's assembled a fine quintet of his own here, the members of which do his music credit but rather overshadow him as a player.

The rhythm section is superb. Moffett's drumming is sharp and purposeful, each part of the kit beautifully articulated in his dancing patterns. Hopkins' playing is supple, athletic and inventive. Masuhiyah, from Shannon Jackson's band, makes a particularly vivid contribution. His sound adds a mellow but metallic texture, thoroughly contemporary but demonstrating a nice restraint that gives Hopkins and Moffett room for finesse.

DAVID S WARE is best known as a member of Andrew Cyrille's quartet: he has an effectively broad, throaty tone on tenor and an intense way with the stritch. Not groundbreaking but distinctive. Abdullah's playing is a mite more anonymous somehow. You can hear Navarro, you can hear Brown, even Cherry; you can hear

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competent, musical and resourceful trumpeter playing, but not an identifiably individual sound.

His writing and arrangements have character though — deft, subtle and tuneful. "El Canto" is a pretty Brazilian tune which the trumpet states over a stately rhythm. Masuhija shows his knack for making the unexpected sound right with some playful guitar lines. Sax joins in with the chorus and intersects as Abdullah sings the song. "The Dance We Do" is a slow Ornette-ish theme with a fast chorus played over ostinato guitar and a bass thrum. Trumpet and guitar solo before an exhilarating stretch solo, the rhythm section indulging in some high brinkmanship, pushing Ware to the edge then holding back.

If they don't actually go over that's in the nature of this band. Mature, considered and inventive music; not a bit brash, but not a bit boring. The sort of thing Silkheart is beginning to etch out an identity with.

STEVE LEWIS

MUHAL RICHARD ABRAMS

YOUNG AT HEART/WISE IN TIME (Delmark DS 415)

Recorded: Chicago 1968*

Young At Heart, Wise In Time,

Muhal Richard Abrams (p), Leo Smith (t, fln), Henry Threadgill (as); Lester Lushy (b), Thurman Barker (perc).

ANTHONY BRAXTON

THREE COMPOSITIONS OF NEW JAZZ (Delmark DS 423)

Recorded: Chicago 1968*

Complaint 6E, Complaint 6D; The Bell.

Anthony Braxton (as, sa, cl, fl, perc), Lenox Jenkins (vn, vla, perc), Leo Smith (t, perc), Richard Abrams (p, cello, cl).

OPENING THE Abrams album Leo Smith's trumpet cuts through a percussive tinkle of piano, bells and gong with icy blasts of enormous trumpeter-sound. Next, the shock of a galloping hi-hat and bass introduce a free jazz romp led by weeping and calling from Threadgill's (surprisingly Coltrane-like) alto. The piano's dancing lines and waves meet suddenly desperate clusters of sound. In Abrams' solo exploration, "Young At Heart" (misitled on the sleeve), different genres are hinted and skirted but never quite embraced, all in an atmosphere of complete collectedness and

calm. It is strangely pleasing that while America's cities were being torn apart Abrams could still make music closer to the budding of a flower than the rat-tat-tat of a machine gun. And how alien to free jazz it is.

Braxton's debut, despite the title, is self-consciously not a jazz record. But it is not the severe, furrowed brow affair you might imagine either. It is spacious, whimsical, playful, even fun. The attraction lies in its emphasis on the simple pleasure of sound, here one moment, gone the next; impossible to abstract, analyse or recall, it has to be lived.

It starts, oddly enough, with some ensemble singing. Tralalala. Then whistling. More voices. Pings and clicks of percussion. Braxton's acid alto. Harmonica. Football rattle? Pause for breath. Boom, a big bass drum . . . and so on. Each sound has independence and



distinction but relationship too. There is a sort of conversation going on, but not the intense communion of latterday Coltrane, nor the rapid alterations of Derek Bailey and Evan Parker. Instead there is relaxation, friendliness, spaces that leaven, even a joke or two, boom boom (it's that drum again.) Such music chattle(l)enges the listener, for, when the needle lifts from the disc, the silence has become rich in possibility, pregnant with uncertainty.

This is an essential recording for Braxtonians and, for anyone else, a good place to begin to appreciate the specificity of the late '60s Chicago approach, which has such a complex and contradictory relationship to its own time and to ours. It is extraordinary that such newly creative music emerged there less than a decade after Ornette Coleman's first album.

RICHARD SCOTT

JANE BUNNETT

IN DEW TIME

(Dark Light DL-9001)

Recorded: Toronto, 25 & 26 February 1988.

Big Alice, The Wanderer, Linda, Urviklingsang, Ju-Du-Two, Find A Long As There's Music.

Jane Bunnett (ss, f), Larry Cramer (t, flhn); Vincent Chaney (flh), Dewey Redman (ts), Don Pullen, Brian Dickinson (p), Scott Alexander (bs); Claude Ranger (d).

YES, THE album title sets my teeth on edge too. Disregard this though, and this Canadian lady offers some surprises. The music comes from a number of different directions; all of them familiar but with some pedigree, welded together by quality performances and imaginative programming.

Bunnett opens with Pullen in a flute and piano duet on "Big Alice," a theme redolent of Mingus's mock-gospel events. "Wanderer" invokes something of Wayne Shorter's re-statement of Trane's values, while "Limbo" recalls something of Mantler and the JCO although — perhaps mercifully — on a much smaller scale. The title track theme, written by trumpeter Cramer, is good enough to have come from the pen of Ornette. The final piece is less easily attributed, but I would guess at a nationality/gender line of thought which ties it back to Mingus through Joni Mitchell's "Chinese Cafe/Unchained Melody" sequence — unfortunately it's not the best-realised part of the album.

In terms of performance, Bunnett acknowledges Dolphy and Steve Lacy as major influences. The notable absence of people who play like them tends to indicate that these are no easy thought processes to break into, but on the title track, on soprano, she cracks it totally, while the flute solo on Carla Bley's "Urviklingsang" hammers Dolphy-like lines into some of Yusuf Lateef's effects and offers the most convincing moments on the instrument I've heard since their time.

For this event, Bunnett's regular group has been reinforced by Pullen, Redman and Chaney, three very heavy dudes on their instruments. Neither Bunnett nor Cramer (hear him on the title track) seem the least bit inhibited by their presence, nor does the capable Alexander/Ranger combination — indeed everybody seems to revel in the event, particularly perhaps Pullen, who is at his drolllest on "Big Alice".

Intriguing stuff then: Bunnett appears also

to work with a quartet devoted to Monk themes — she's not the first to do this but it's always good ground to cover. If it ever gets onto record that should be worth hearing too.

JACK COOKE

CHRISTOPHER SPENDEL GROUP/ ANNIE WHITEHEAD

READY FOR TAKE OFF

Recorded: Villingen, September 1988.

Sainte, Rain; Carly; Queen's Plaza; Ready For Take Off; Downstair, Monday In July; Tapis Stretches Again. Spendl (p), Whitehead (tbn), Stefan Rademacher (b); Kurt Billker (dr), Michael Kurner (perc).

A GERMAN band performing a largely Latin set with an English trombonist. Spendl, a relaxed-sounding pianist with strong elements of both Chick Corea and Tyner in his playing, has composed all eight selections — and if *Ready For Take Off* isn't quite hold-the-front-page material, the album has two imposing ingredients going for it in the amiable swing of the writing and the warmth and mobility of Annie Whitehead's horn. Though a trombone-led piano trio sounds an unpromising prospect for a Latin session, Whitehead's playing (like that of one of her lifelong gurus, JJ Johnson) is a combination of the effortless speed that misleadingly suggests a valve trombone, and a lightness of attack that maintains the springiness of the idiom without undue bother for most of the duration of the session.

Without high trumpets on those riff-like salsa melodies, the band takes on a quality that is both gruff and frivolous at once, like a heavyweight tapdancing — and oddly, the ensemble sound on "Salsito" is reminiscent of nothing so much as a very early Mike Westbrook group.

Annie Whitehead's solos give the whole disc a transforming warmth and expansiveness. She is talkative and vibrant on the fast, percussion-heavy salsa tune "Rain", soft and luminous as Bill Harris on the gently charming ballad "Carly", unexpectedly bucolic and grainy over a rock pulse on "Queen's Plaza", and gracefully reggae-boom on "Tapis Strikes Again". The sleeve artwork, emphasising the album title by perching the band beside antique aircraft and badly-drawn seagulls, has managed to bypass just about anything of value to have emerged from the last 20 years of graphic design, but the set is an unpretentious and low-profile success.

JOHN FORDHAM

FAST LICKS

*Stylus consulting by
Graham Lock*

BERT WILSON & REBIRTH: THE NEXT REBIRTH (9 Wards NW 0124). From the Pacific North West a stunning LP that bristles with attack and vigour. Wilson, a post-polio quadriplegic who's been confined to a wheelchair since the age of four, leads his Rebirth sextet on tenor and alto saxes and bass clarinet and livens up traditional forms (rumba, waltz, blues etc) with the infectious spirit of modern jazz. His technique is amazing — fast fingering plus a five-octave range which he uses to whoop and whoosh through these tracks as if

typical Rollins. It's effective though, leading to a choppy, querulous "In Your Own Sweet Way", a softly-smudged "Pannonica" and the elegant colours of "Theme For Ernie". I know nothing about Bergonzi (another *Greco* omission?), except that I'd like to hear more.

ARTHIE SHAW: THE COMPLETE GRAMERCY FIVE SESSIONS (Blue Bird 7637-1-RB). The classic small-group dates from 1940 and 1945, the former line-up has Billy Butterfield on trumpet and Johnny Guarnieri on harpsichord, the latter Roy Eldridge and Dodo Marmarosa (on piano). Formed to give the players in Shaw's orchestra more room to solo, the Five (actually a sextet) used only brief head arrangements and improvised the rest, the result being a relaxed swing studded with glittering solos. There may be a marginal shift away from Dixieland's group exuberance towards bebop's brooding self-analysis between the 1940 and 1945 sessions, but mostly this is expertly played and crafted mainstream jazz led by Shaw's bright, singing clarinet.



on some fantastic roller-coaster ride. Rebirth can mix it up too; while several fine compositions include the lilting mambo "Allyson By Moonlight", the ballad "Where Love Is" and a tenor/drum duo "Speed Of Light" which Wilson rips through with a gusto that'll flatten you to the wall.

JERRY BERGONZI: JERRY ON RED (Red RRI23224). There have been some splendid releases from the Milan-based Red label in recent months and here's another: tenorman Jerry Bergonzi fronting an immaculate Italian rhythm section. The sleeve-note comparisons to Rollins puzzled me: Bergonzi's method is to build his solos from abrupt little squiggles and dabs, like an Impressionist painter, and he sounds more abstract and fragmented than

HAZE GREENFIELD: ALL ABOUT YOU (Blackhawk BHK 535). Impressive debut from a young altoist much helped by an impeccable array of sidemen — Jaki Byard, Toen Harrell, Ray Drummond etc — who all give of their considerable best. The leader traverses the post-bop mainstream with flair: invention may flag momentarily — "That's All" sees him flag a dead riff at one point — but mostly he plays with dashing zest and turns out some attractive tunes. "Byard Inspired" is witty too — and the pianist's closing touches to "Well You Needn't" amply justify the epithet.

HOWARD McGHEE: MAGGIE'S BACK IN TOWN (Contemporary COP 044). McGhee's name gets overlooked when "great trumpeter" lists are drawn up, perhaps because he never adhered to a specific stylistic school. Originally swing-oriented and inspired by Roy Eldridge, he was later influenced by boppers like Gillespie and Navarro and forged a personal style from elements of old and new. This record, from 1961, finds him in engagingly mellow mood with a sympathetic quartet of Shelly Manne, Leroy Vinnegar and Phineas Newborn Jr. Tunes are familiar — "Willow Weep For

Me", "Summertime", pieces by McGhee, Clifford Brown, Teddy Edwards – but the performances are spirited while McGhee's "melodic flow and remarkable subtle rhythmic placement" (as noted by Nat Hentoff) are well to the fore.

JAN WALLGREN: BLUE PRINTS (*Dragon DR LP 147*). Fascinating collection of miniatures from Norwegian-born pianist now resident in Sweden who counts Hampton Hawes, Alan Hovhaness and Renaissance music among his influences. Wallgren has written opera and theatre music, but it's the art of brevity he displays here on 24 pieces for solo piano. Six are by fellow pianist Lasse Werner – a suite in homage to Berg, Schoenberg and Webern written, says Wallgren, in "solid bebop tradition" (the longest last 1'29") – while his own "Six Blueprints" and 12-movement "Hints And Suggestions" fleetingly evoke ballads, marches, nocturnes, Africa, Messiaen and Serie. Wallgren's sleeve-note allusion to "pedagogical implications" hints at severity, but I found the LP's intricate, elusive lyricism captivating.

GEORGE LEWIS, DON EWELL: REUNION (*Denmark DS-220*). Sprightly 1966 session by the great New Orleans clarinetist in cahoots with longtime associates Jim Robinson, Don Ewell and Cie Frazier. Lewis's sensuous lines dance airily beside Robinson's brusque 'bone and Ewell's crisp piano while Frazier both anchors the beat with a thumping bass drum and emboldens it with some wonderful wood-block and cymbal patterns. Magical music in which the elders reflect on youth and transience and conclude that, really, everything is *all right*.

THE CHARLIE BYRD TRIO W/SCOTT HAMILTON: IT'S A WONDERFUL WORLD (*Camden Jazz CJ374*). See what I mean? Byrd's pell-mell finger-style guitar plus Hamilton's gruffly Websterish tenor plus a clutch of standards that includes four Duke Ellington classics. What can I say? It's quiet, modest, tuneful, tasteful – but I like it anyway. Hamilton is a deft, genuinely lyrical voice and the group make an unassuming delight in the music which shines through.

THE SUPER QUARTET OF MAL WALDRON, W/STEVE LACY: LIVE AT SWIFT BASIL (*Paddle Wheel K28P 6471*). More Mal and Steve play Monk, etc. Rich though it is, this particular seam may have been overworked recently. Half the repertoire here comprises "Snake Out" and "Let's Call This", the Waldron/Lacy duo versions of which on *Art* are still fresh in the mind. The intimacy and stark beauty of those recordings have been swapped for the extra propulsion of a rhythm section – a dodgy exchange to my mind because Eddie Moore's busy drumming fills up the space which previously framed Waldron and Lacy to such good effect. The one plus-point is the presence of maestro bassist Reggie Workman, though the reminder that his own excellent Ensemble is so criminally *unreleased* makes me more impatient with less essential releases like this.



BETTY CARTER: THE BOP GIRL (*Official 3023*). Two of the great bebop singer's earliest sets: a 1955 quintet date with pianist Ray Bryant plus a 1956 session with a 13-piece group and arrangements by Gigi Gryce. She sounds a little stiff at times, a little tentative; though nor quite in place, most of the hallmarks of her remarkable style are already audible: the sudden deep notes of "Tell Him I Said Hello", the assured scatting of "Frenesi", the sardonic humour of "Can't We Be Friends". Intriguing for fans, but the still-embryonic talent and a total playing time of approx 30 minutes make this the last Betty Carter LP to buy.

RABIB ABOU-KHALIL: BUKRA (*MMP 176889*) Rabib burns? Well, Mr Abou-Khalil

is hardly the Jimi Hendrix of the oud, alas, but the presence of Sonny Fortune's squawking alto makes this a far livelier affair than its soporific predecessor, *Between Dark And Dawn*. The co-joining of oud, alto, bass, percussion and South Indian drums may sound ominously trendy, but the regular working unit of Abous-Khalil, Glen Moore, Glen Velez and Ramesh Sotham gives the music a power and cohesion that raise it well above the current fad for spuriously-fused World Muzak. Still, my favourite moments are when Fortune's rare solos rend the sleek surface with abrupt flare-ups of alto frenzy.

WINDMILL SAXOPHONE QUARTET: VERY SCARY (*Pathfinder PTF 8801*). Washington DC group, led by multi-instrumentalist Clayton Englar, who favour a rhythmic, carefully-arranged approach to the four-horn format. This debut LP mixes originals with such standbys as "God Bless The Child" and "Evidence" – the lusty blowing and rich harmonies of the former and the cleverly fragmented lines of the latter marking the polarities of a group who rarely venture that far out. They use flutes and clarinets too; persuasively so on the atmospheric "Forge", though they then spoil it with stupid vocal interjections. Perhaps a little less archness and a few more risks would have helped: the LP has some accomplished touches, but scary it isn't.

NANCY: NANCY (*casette, no catalogue number*). Curious name for a quartet of UK improvisers – Godfrey Talbot, Mike Walter (saxes); Ollie Blanchflower (bass); Jim Le Baigue (drums) – who also do themselves no favours with a cover photo which has them looking like they've just climbed out of their coffins and are coming to eat your children. (This *is* scary!) The music itself is cuddly by comparison: not-quite-tonal improvisation (I assume) which balances fierce, full-blooded blowing with a firm sense of shape and discipline. The well-paced, squarely rangles of "You Must Be Joking", slow, sourly haunting "Beyond The Valley Of The Hills" and abstract textural explorations of "Squirt" demonstrate the group's command of free improvisation in its various guises. If only they'd said "cheese". (Available from 4 Walpole Gardens, Twickenham, London TW2 5SJ.)

MAX AND DUKE

ONE POINT came to mind when reading Brian Priestley (*Wm* 63) on Duke's jaunty contribution to "Black And Tan Fantasy": it is that DE relished these mood changes and purposely introduced them into his compositions and orchestrations, often to better effect than is evidenced in "Black And Tan", for instance. I think a simple example would be "Mood Indigo", on which the melancholy, calm nature of the second theme is relieved by the relatively jumpy Bigard solo on the second section (which he claimed as his composition); though this is not, of course, an example of a contrasting piano spot.

Examples of "out of place" or otherwise "irrelevant" (to employ a word used by James Lincoln Collier in this context) Ellington solo interludes are quite plentiful — "Creole Rhapsody" is one which has been cited — and I think many of us will gain a little extra amusement from going through the collection of earlier Ellington records on the look-out for inappropriate keyboard passages. This kind of analytical listening does no harm, and can give pleasure although it would doubtless have surprised the young Duke at the time the recordings were first current. For myself, I admit to having no recollection of what DE played on "Black and Tan" at the Palladium in the summer of 1933; but I still hold a quite vivid memory of Coote, Tricky Sam and Hardwick (the light relief again) laying down solos which definitely resembled those known to us intimately from the Brunswick version — the first, and always my favourite. The overall image of Duke, however, is imprinted indelibly in the mind.

I am not sure whether these piano contributions were irrelevant, irreverent or sort of experimental — pauses to lessen the tension or perhaps trial runs until the leader found a passage which best fitted the composition/arrangement, in his view of course. He directed the musical course of events from the piano, we agree, and it seems reasonable to suppose he would utilize his keyboard opportunities to impose his taste and control of mood, tempo and so on upon the performance. We should not forget that Duke was most unselfish in his allotment of solo space, and unmatched in his ability and willingness to present his soloists to maximum advantage.

Before leaving this fascinating subject I'd like to add a note to Andy Hamilton's piece about Duke's development — as writer of extended works. Without contradicting his opening paragraph (related to Carnegie Hall in 1943), can I remind your readers that jazz enthusiasts of my generation all believe that

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DE made his concert debut as a composer of such works at a concert in London's Trocadero Cinema one day in '33? I'm not sure now whether his "Creole Rhapsody" was featured at the first Troc concert or the Farewell show on Sunday, July 16 (or at both), but I heard it played and appreciated it, as well as I could at the age of 16, as a lengthy piece of "serious" jazz which was not unswingy or pompous. We knew it already from records, and many Ellington fans I met in those days accepted the "Rhapsody" as the likely forerunner of more extended things to come. Few of us disapproved, so far as I recall the critical atmosphere of that distant past, though we knew Spike Hughes had his doubts. Well, no, I and the chaps in our semi-pro band were by no means well informed aficionados of the art; however, we were passionate admirers of "Old Man Blues", "Rockin' In Rhythm", "Ring Dem Bells", "Black And Tan" and such masterworks, and we certainly hared it when Lawrence Brown was sent forward to interpret the ballad, "Trees".

Ah, enchanting days they used to be to us, normally deprived of "live" American jazz. And your Ellington cover triggered off a flood of intense recollections as I gazed upon the dazzling Duke. Congratulations.

MAX JONES, Hastings

Our thanks as always to Max for his recollections — Ed

NEVER MIND THE MUSIC, WHAT ABOUT THE DELAYS?

IT'S IMPORTANT for your reviewers to point out problems with ventures such as Camden Jazz festival. I don't think that Roland Ramanan would have sounded boring to have pointed out that nothing at the Town and Country club's gig could be heard (especially not Lol Coxhill, how did he get into the review's title?) except the macho tenor sax farting of Freedom Principle and that awful pop group Wozani (which was hardly South African — their lead singer doing a Michael Jackson impersonation was quite galling). You simply could not hear the music for the sound of people talking. On my ticket it had the Jazz Renegades at the top of the bill, they didn't turn up.

Roland must have been pretty late for the Cecil Taylor gig if he only waited five minutes, there was an hour's wait before and 45 minutes in the interval. We were eventually let out at 11.20 with a ticket starting time of 7.30, and less than half the intermission was music. These things really spoil a concert and I had hoped that *Wire* might have mentioned them.

I trust my pedantry wins me a place on the back page.

TOM WORSTER, Southampton

CLONE SPEAKS OUT

USUALLY when I write letters to the editor I'm defending my group, Cool and The Clones (*another free plug — Ed*) against uninformed garbage written by droll American critics. Now I must speak up to defend fellow Marylander Gary Bartz — Steve Lake's putdown (*Wm* 62) was way off the mark. I've watched him rag on Schweizer and Carl and overpraise Last Exit — but cutting on Bartz is where I must put my foot down! Gary is playing dynamite also lately and, contrary to his opinion, *Mausov* is a very tasty release. Mr Lake has got a right to his views, but (and this really should apply to anyone writing jazz criticism) do we always have to hear one artist criticized to boost the reputation of another?

Also, may I take this opportunity to say that *Wire* is a great magazine and would do even better with more articles on people like Noah Howard and Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky. Tony Oxley's playing with Cecil Taylor is shaking up a lot of people Stateside, people who a few years ago wouldn't give European free music the time of day.

ERIC ZIARKO, Cabin John, Maryland USA

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